KOINONIA

Princeton Theological Seminary
Graduate Forum

Volume VIII

KOINONIA

Princeton Theological Seminary
Graduate Forum

Volume VIII.1

Spring 1996

KOINONIA

Volume VIII.1 • SPRING 1996

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Primitive Christianity and hermeneutics provide the focus for the four articles in this issue of *Koinonia*. The first article is by James F. McGrath, "Johannine Christianity—*Jewish* Christianity?" According to McGrath, the Johannine community had an adoptionist christology, observed the Torah, and understood 'the Jews' as a rival sect of Jewish leaders who, after 70 C.E., sought to exclude Johannine Christians from the synagogue. On the basis of this reading, McGrath believes that Johannine Christianity was a "Jewish Christianity." It was a type of Christianity, therefore, that expressed itself in Jewish forms similar to those, for instance, in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*:

Laura Hobgood-Oster, in "Mary Magdalene: Gnostic Revealer," analyzes the image of Mary Magdalene in several Gnostic texts coming from Nag Hammadi. Although Hobgood-Oster accepts the consensus that Mary's role in the Gnostic literature was to challenge Peter, the symbol of orthodoxy, she wishes to move beyond it. In her view, Mary is portrayed in this literature as "a primary teacher, revealer and spiritual guide within the Gnostic tradition of formation." As a student of Jesus who ascended to the divine realm, she was therefore able to pass on further knowledge about Jesus in her role as teacher/prophet/revealer. Hobgood-Oster suggests that this picture of Mary provides hints of female educational structures within Gnostic communities and of Gnostic spiritual formation in the second and third centuries.

Mark Ralls provides an alternate reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy in his article, "Wittgenstein's Ancient City: Intersubjective Meaning and the Question of Fideism." Ralls offers a "non-fideist" reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, focusing on the *Philosophical Investigations*. Ralls believes that Wittgenstein's theory of language games con-

structs meaning as an inter-subjective process. Wittgenstein, in Ralls'
view, thus develops a social epistemology that understands individuals
and communities as more than merely autonomous entities. Ralls argues
that the quest for meaning should be evaluated over against the matrix of
daily interaction, i.e., the socio-cultural "web" of our lives.

The final article by D. Paul La Montagne is a comparison of "Hans-
Georg Gadamer's Ontological Hermeneutics and Karl Barth's Biblical
Hermeneutics." For Gadamer, hermeneutics involves the history of the
effects of a text. A person reading a text is shaped by that text so that, in
turn, the questions one raises of a text are determined, in part, by the
text itself. In the encounter with a text, one's horizon is broadened, an
insight is formulated, and a new perspective to the text and to one's self
is gained. This view of hermeneutics bears a strong formal resemblance
to Karl Barth's. The basic difference derives from Gadamer's under-
standing of the effects of a text as universal features whereas for Barth
these effects are "features of a biblical hermeneutic because God reveals
God's self, where, how, and as God wills." This difference notwith-
standing, it is nonetheless possible, in La Montagne's view, to use
Gadamer's critical theory in conjunction with Barth's biblical hermeneu-
tic based on God's self-revelation.

— WESLEY W. SMITH

Johannine Christianity - *Jewish* Christianity?

JAMES F. MCGRATH

SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF J. LOUIS MARTYN'S DECISIVE STUDY, *HISTORY AND Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1979), there has been a growing consensus among Johannine scholars that the Gospel of John was composed in the context of conflict with the synagogue, and that it is thus best understood and interpreted against the background of Judaism and Jewish Christianity[1]. However, several recent studies have sought to challenge this position, primarily on two fronts: Johannine Christology (Casey 1991:23-38) and the Johannine attitude towards the Torah (Schnelle 1992:31-36). These recent challenges to the growing consensus have also pointed to the Johannine attitude toward 'the Jews' as corroborating evidence to support their case. It would seem in order, then, to study these three key aspects of John's Gospel—Christology, Torah, and 'the

[1] So e.g. Ashton, Brown, Charlesworth, Cullmann, Dahl, Dunn, Meeks, Pancaro, Smith and Whitacre. Some have followed Martyn in using the term 'Christian Jews' for this earlier period (i.e. when some Jews happened to be Christians), saving the term 'Jewish Christians' for the later period (when there was a minority of Jewish believers in a predominantly Gentile church). This distinction is helpful, but the term 'Jewish Christianity' is retained here because it is more familiar, and also in order to retain the sense of continuity between the two phenomena.

Jews'—in order to see whether and to what extent they demonstrate Johannine Christianity to be essentially Jewish or non-Jewish.

DEFINING JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

Schnelle, in the work just cited, mentions several times the need for a clear definition of what precisely is meant by Jewish Christianity. J. Daniélou suggests three possible meanings for this term: "First, it may designate *those Jews who acknowledged Christ as a prophet or a Messiah, but not as the Son of God*, and thus form a separate class, half-way between Jews and Christians...The second possible reference for the term 'Jewish Christianity' is *the Christian community of Jerusalem*, dominated by James and the tendencies for which he stood. This community was perfectly orthodox in its Christianity but remained attached to certain Jewish ways of life, without, however, imposing them on proselytes from paganism... Finally, a third possible reference of the term 'Jewish Christianity' is a type of *Christian thought expressing itself in forms borrowed from Judaism*" (1964:7-9).

This definition provides a useful starting point for our discussion, but it needs to be examined critically before we proceed. Firstly, the third category (which is the one that Daniélou himself is most concerned with) is too broad for our purposes. Johannine Christianity, like all forms of Christianity represented in the New Testament, was still working with the language and images current in Judaism. Indeed, as Daniélou's study shows, Jewish imagery and modes of thought played a very important role in many streams of Christianity even when it ceased to be a predominantly Jewish phenomenon. We must find a narrower definition of 'Jewish Christianity' for the purpose of this study.

The difficulties involved in defining Jewish Christianity are well known (cf. Riegel 1977; Colpe 1993). For example, although one might suggest that Jewish Christianity be defined in ethnic terms, this becomes impossible when we consider that one may be ethnically Jewish and yet apostatize from the Jewish religion. It would seem that the definition of 'Jewish Christianity' is plagued by all of the difficulties involved in defining 'Judaism' during this period (cf. Casey 1991, ch. 2). Rather than work only with a theoretical definition, therefore, a better methodology will be to relate the Gospel of John to what is universally recognized as a Jewish

Christian *document*. For our purposes, we may consider in particular the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*[2]. This work is generally accepted as stemming from a Jewish Christian group, most likely Ebionites[3].

We may take this line of approach because it appears, as has been suggested by a number of recent scholars, that Daniélou's first two categories overlap to a large extent. James Dunn, in one of his studies of earliest Christianity, has noted that *"Heretical Jewish Christianity would appear to be not so very different from the faith of the first Jewish believers"* (1990:242). Dunn examines three aspects of 'heretical' Jewish Christianity (such as Ebionitism) which he finds to coincide largely with the beliefs of earliest Palestinian Christianity as represented in the New Testament: (a) adherence to the Law; (b) exaltation of James and denigration of Paul;[4] (c) adoptionism (1990:240-243). It would appear that, contrary to Daniélou's suggestion, there is no firm boundary between the faith of the earliest Jerusalem community of Jewish Christians and the later forms of Jewish Christianity which were eventually deemed 'heretical'. This is not to say that they were in all respects identical, but merely that they were fundamentally similar, and that there was sufficient continuity between them for it to be legitimate to group them together under the single heading, 'Jewish Christianity'. A similar conclusion has been reached by C. Colpe (1993:75) and G. Quispel (1972:137-140; see also Schoeps 1949:257).

[2] On the Pseudo-Clementine Literature see Schoeps (1949, 1956); Strecker (1981). Schoeps himself adopts the method of focusing on documents rather than abstract definitions of Jewish Christianity (1949:7), and considers the Pseudo-Clementine literature an extremely important witness (1949:37). The *Recognitions* have been chosen because they bear a greater affinity to Johannine thought than do the *Homilies*.

[3] The earliest strata of the work is perhaps as early as the second century C.E. (Daniélou 1964:59; Schoeps 1949:54f), and it had probably, after a complicated process of composition and development, reached more or less its final form by some time during the third or fourth century (cf. Strecker 1981:255-270).

[4] It will not be worth dwelling on this feature: it is notable in John only by its absence. There is no defence of Paul or his views, nor are these opposed. Given the evidence noted below, we cannot say that the Gospel of John provides any clear indication that the teaching of Paul is presupposed. Certain developments (such as Wisdom Christology) which are reflected in Paul are found also in John, but these can be understood as part of their common inheritance from earlier Christianity rather than in terms of Johannine dependence on Paul (so also Scroggs 1988:105). See further n.16 below.

In this study, therefore, we can limit ourselves for the most part to a study of the similarities which exist in these three key areas between the Gospel of John on the one hand, and Jewish Christianity as represented by later literature such as the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* on the other. Obviously, given the difference in date between these works, we may expect to find significant differences as well. However, it is still a useful undertaking to attempt to determine whether there is a 'trajectory', a continuous stream of development in which both John and the *Recognitions* are included, which may be categorized as 'Jewish Christianity' (cf. Schoeps 1949:257; Martyn 1977b). A study of these similarities, and an attempt to answer the objections raised by scholars such as Casey and Schnelle, will be the focus of the rest of this work. For convenience we may continue to speak of 'Jewish Christianity' as an umbrella term for the Pseudo-Clementines and for other literature and streams of thought which contain the features which will concern us in this study (See further Quispel 1972:137-139; Schoeps 1949:8).

CHRISTOLOGY

The Christology of Jewish Christianity has been characterized as 'adoptionist', a relatively modern term denoting a Christology in which Jesus becomes 'Son of God' in a unique sense *at his baptism*.[5] In this stream of early Christian thought, the Christ/Holy Spirit comes upon or enters into the man Jesus. The heavenly being who comes upon Jesus is subordinate to God,[6] and this incarnation takes place at the baptism of Jesus rather than at his birth.

What is interesting is that several scholars have proposed that John be read in precisely this way (So e.g. Watson 1987, Fuller 1990, Talbert 1992:45f, 75f; 1993; cf. Schoonenberg 1986). As Talbert notes (1992:75), we are accustomed to read John in light of the Synoptics, as has tradition-

---

[5] It should be noted that Daniélou's statement (1964:56) that 'heretical' Jewish Christians such as the Ebionites did not accept Jesus as Son of God is mistaken: they did accept this title, but did not understand it in the same way that later Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy would.

[6] Cf. Hofrichter (1992). The exact relationship of Jesus/the Logos to God did not become a major issue, and therefore was not clearly defined, until much later than John's time.

ally been done in the Church, and thus to understand the incarnation in John as having taken place at Jesus' conception. However, given that the conception and birth of Jesus are not recounted in John, and that, for the vast majority of Jews and Christians of this period, the Logos and the Holy Spirit were not clearly distinct entities,[7] it becomes a strong possibility that early readers of John's Gospel would have understood the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus as describing the same event as that described in the prologue as the Word becoming flesh. Further evidence for this may perhaps be found in 1 John 5:6-8, which is regarded by many as evidence that there was a debate between the author of 1 John and his opponents about whether the Christ left Jesus before the crucifixion, and thus did not suffer.[8] If this is a correct reading, then the author of 1 John agreed with his opponents that the Christ came 'through water,' i.e. at Jesus' baptism.[9]

C. K. Barrett, in his article on subordinationist Christology (1982), noted that John, while in one sense the basis of later orthodox Christological formulas, is in another sense a challenge to traditional Christology, containing elements that do not seem to fit. The key aspect which he focuses on is subordinationism, a feature which is represented both in John and in Jewish Christianity. In John, the main objection which 'the Jews' bring against the Jesus is that he 'makes himself equal with God' or 'claims to be God.' Jesus, however, is not presented as readily defending his equality with God or divinity, but rather as emphasizing the Son's dependence on the Father in all things (John 5:19), or as appealing to the wider use of the term 'God' in the Hebrew Bible (John 10:34-36).[10]

[7] The most notable example is Justin Martyr, who frequently uses the terms interchangeably. On the similar phenomenon in Philo see Talbert (1993:45f). This point is also noted by Dunn (1989:266).

[8] This is not to imply a wholesale identification of the opponents with Cerinthians, but simply to note a similarity in this one area. See the discussion of this passage in Brown (1982:573-578); Talbert (1993:49f).

[9] Of course, the Fourth Gospel does not mention that Jesus was baptised by John. However, this is presumably due to a concern not to present Jesus as in any way inferior to the Baptist. There is no real reason to doubt that the author knew the tradition attested to in the Synoptics that it was at Jesus' *baptism* that John the Baptist witnessed the descent of the Spirit upon him.

[10] In John 10:30, Jesus claims oneness with the Father. In the context of the chapter, and of the Gospel as a whole, this clearly should be understood in terms

His 'blasphemy' in using the divine name for himself (8:58f) is the use of a name rightly his, not because of his own inherent and eternal possession of it, but because the Father has given it to him (17:11). The same is true of his 'glory' (17:22).

The argument in John 10 concerning the use of the title 'God' is remarkably close to the argument in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 2.42,[11] where Peter is described as explaining that there is only one true God, the God of the Jews, and yet also explains how the term 'god' can be used more widely, including for Christ. The same work also speaks of Jesus in very Johannine terms: "although he was the Son of God, and the beginning of all things, he became man" (1.45), and further: "the Son...has been with the Father from the beginning, and through all generations...the Son reveals the Father to those who honour the Son as they honour the Father" (2.48). In 1.43, Peter is described as asserting that the only difference between Christians and Jews is the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah; for John, this is also the key (if not the only) difference.

Further, as even Maurice Casey would himself agree, the Johannine Christians did not move from Jewish monotheism to pagan polytheism: they regarded Jesus as divine, but would not have accepted the exaltation of other persons or beings to similar status (1991:37f). For John, the Father of Jesus, who is the God of the Jews, is "the only true God" (John 17:3), even though John, like the author of the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, can use the term God more broadly. The reason why Casey cannot regard Johannine Christology as a Jewish development is that he will not allow John the broader definition of monotheism which he allows to Philo and other clearly Jewish authors (Casey 1991:93; for a helpful discussion and bibliography on the difficulty of defining monotheism, see Stuckenbruck 1995:15-21). One cannot help but wonder whether, if 'Philonism' had developed into an independent religion, he would not have rejected Philo as well for having moved too far away from 'orthodox Judaism'. As scholars are continuously seeking to remind us, it was only

---

of unity rather than identification. 'The Jews' in this chapter apparently understood Jesus to be claiming the latter, but this is a *mis*understanding on their part, which results (as so frequently in John) from Jesus' use of a *double entendre*.

[11] Both Schoeps (1949:51) and Strecker (1981:265) consider this passage to come from a source used by both the Pseudo-Clementine works, thus making it somewhat earlier than the finished *Recognitions* or *Homilies*.

after A.D. 70 that an 'orthodox' Judaism even *began* to emerge, and when it did, both Philo and John were defined out.[12] As Philip S. Alexander remarks, "There can now be no question that early Judaism did know of powerful semi-divine mediator figures, so the high Christology of some of the early Christian writings can actually be given a *Jewish* context" (Alexander 1992:19f; see further the balanced criticisms of Casey in Dunn 1994).

We have thus seen that John's Christology can be understood in such a way as to be essentially in agreement with that of Jewish Christianity. That the Johannine Christians were expelled from their local synagogue largely on account of their christological beliefs does not present a problem, since it is not by any means clear that the group of Jewish Christians represented by the Pseudo-Clementine literature were still attending synagogue, or that their christology was any more acceptable to their local Jewish community than that of the Johannine Christians. However, it must be acknowledged that the *Recognitions* does not express the same depth of hostility to 'the Jews' which we find in John, and an explanation for this aspect of the Fourth Gospel will need to be provided (see below).

TORAH

Another key feature of Jewish Christianity is continued adherence to the Torah and observance of Jewish customs and practices. Schnelle considers that "The Gospel of John cannot be interpreted as a witness to Jewish Christianity. On the contrary, it reflects both a historical and a theological distance from Judaism…The distance that already exists between the Fourth Gospel and Judaism is clearly evident from the Gospel's understanding of the law" (1992:31). However, it is not clear anywhere in the Gospel of John that the Johannine Christians no longer kept the Torah; in fact, S. Pancaro has arrived at exactly the opposite conclusion from Schnelle:

---

[12] On the diversity of first-century Judaism see also Johnson (1989:426-428); Neusner (1993:2-3). Overman's description (1990:38-43) of Jamnia as "the beginning of the end of sectarianism" is a helpful and balanced formulation.

[I]t would appear that Jn is to be situated in a Jewish milieu, that his community is formed by Jewish-Christians who observe the Law, but who differ from their Jewish brethren because of the faith they have in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and, consequently, in the attitude they assume towards the Law. While they follow it, they do not agree that their relationship to God is determined by their relationship to the Law, that God has revealed himself and his will exclusively in the Law. They claim that a Jew, however faithful to the Law of Moses, cannot be saved unless he believes in Jesus as the Christ (Pancaro 1975:530; similar conclusions are reached by J. L. Martyn 1977a:158f; Whitacre 1982:64-68. See also the discussion in Smiga 1992:141-148).

Schnelle's reading of John is not as convincing as Pancaro's precisely because it does not do justice to the depth of feeling in John surrounding the controversy with the Jews and the expulsion from the synagogue (this criticism is also raised against him by Menken 1993:308). He also does not sufficiently justify his readings of certain passages, and throughout his discussion he gives the impression that he is reading John, as it were, through Pauline spectacles. It is by no means clear to the present writer why John 6:32 and 7:22 prove that "the divine legitimation given to Moses is clearly disparaged" (Schelle 1992:31)[13] nor why 4:20-24 means that "Christians...have left the stage of a religion of law behind them" (Schelle 1992:31).[14] He criticizes Pancaro for leaving his treatment of John 1:17 until the end of his book (Schnelle 1992:31 n.200), but it is not

---

[13] In 6:32 there is presumably a contrast between the Torah and/or Moses and Christ (cf. Brown 1966:262; Lindars 1972:250), but 'disparaged' is unjustifiably harsh in this context. The contrasts between Jesus and Moses or Torah must be placed in the context of the conflict between the Johannine Christians and the synagogue: the rabbis claimed to be Moses' disciples (John 9:28f), and John emphatically makes the point that Moses is not God's final word, that Moses himself pointed to one who would come in the future. It may be further noted that, even if it is the case that John 6 contrasts Jesus with the Law or with Moses more sharply than the rest of the Gospel, this may also be because the chapter is part of the latest strata of the Gospel, as Lindars (1972:50) has suggested. See further the debate about the relationship between Moses and Jesus in Ps.-Clem. *Recognitions*, I.58-59.

[14] The reference in John 4:20ff is to worship which does not involve the Temple; the Ebionites also rejected the Temple and sacrifice while still feeling loyal to Torah in other respects.

clear that this rather ambiguous verse should be used to interpret the rest of John, rather than vice versa. On its own, and even in the context of the whole prologue, 1:17 could be either antithetic or synthetic parallelism (Pancaro 1975:537). It is possible to read 1:16f in a way quite different from that proposed by Schnelle (for one such reading, cf. Edwards 1988).

Further, as Pancaro notes (1975:499), apart from a passing reference to circumcision in 7:21-23, the only precept of the Torah mentioned in John is the Sabbath. It is frequent to note that in John, Jesus is more clearly presented as breaking the Sabbath (giving an order to take up the mat; making mud and anointing the eyes). Yet the key force of John's argument in a Jewish context is frequently missed. Scholars frequently note the fact that it appears to have been generally accepted in Jewish thought that God 'works' in some sense on the Sabbath (cf. the references in Dodd 1953:320-323 and Barrett 1978:256). What needs to be noted in addition to this is that in Judaism to keep the Sabbath was conceived of in terms of imitating God (Gen.2:2f). This point seems to lie behind the argument in John: in what sense can it be a breaking of the Sabbath to participate in the work of God? John wishes to show not that the Sabbath is abolished, but that doing God's work (of healing), like obeying the Law of Moses in circumcising a child, overrides the Sabbath, precisely because it is a participation in the work of God himself.

A further point which needs to be examined is the fact that John consistently speaks of '*your* Law' or 'the Law *of the Jews*'. Several scholars have suggested that this does not in fact imply that John is putting distance between himself and Judaism/Torah, but that he is using the language of polemic: 'the very Law to which you appeal in condemning us says....' Quite recently, B. G. Schuchard has suggested that this feature of Johannine language does not have any negative connotations, but rather emphasizes Jewish blindness in respect to their own scriptures (1992:154f n.13). It is for this reason dubious to appeal to this feature in the Fourth Gospel as evidence that the author wished to distance himself and his community from Judaism and its scriptures.

We may note briefly the relationship between John and the Pseudo-Clementines in this area.[15] If in John the observance of the precepts of Torah is not an issue, by the time the later Ebionite literature was com-

[15] On this subject see Schoeps (1949, ch.3); Strecker (1981:162-171,179-184). The view of the Pseudo-Clementines concerning the Law is found in both

posed it had become one. The reason for this is presumably the move from being a minority of believers in Jesus among a Jewish majority to being a minority of Jewish believers in a predominantly Gentile church. One distinctive aspect of the Pseudo-Clementine literature is its emphatic opposition to the Temple cult. While this may bear some relation to John 4:20-24, there are also significant differences. The most striking of these is the Ebionite teaching that positive references in the Old Testament to sacrifice (and other practices to which they were opposed) were 'false pericopae.' Here there is a striking difference from John, and in this case John would appear closer to the position of the majority of Jews in his time than the Pseudo-Clementines were. If the latter are rightly called Jewish Christian, then the title would seem to be appropriate to John as well, at least as far as his attitude to the Law is concerned.

Here again, it cannot be said that we have proved that the Gospel of John is a Jewish Christian document. However, it has hopefully been demonstrated that there is simply no clear evidence in the Gospel of John itself that Johannine Christians were not Torah-observant. Most scholars who consider that the Johannine Christians did *not* keep the Law have to suggest that the debate over Torah (in which Paul was engaged) lies in the past, so that John can assume it without mention. This is not impossible, but seems unlikely given the conflict with the synagogue that appears to be reflected in John. John reflects the accusations of 'the Jews' against the Johannine Christians in Christology and other areas and seeks to address them, and it would be surprising for him not to do so concerning the issue of Torah observance, were this at issue in the conflict. In fact, the only accusation of failure to observe Torah in John is made by Jesus against the Jews (John 7:19)! The most that is said of the Johannine Christians is that they are 'ignorant of the Law,' i.e. *'amme ha-aretz'*. The most logical explanation for the evidence of John is that the issue between the Johannine Christians and the synagogue was *Christology* and not *Torah observance*.[16] This again would match what we know of Jewish Christianity.

---

the *Recognitions* and the *Homilies*, and is traceable to their common source, the *Preaching of Peter*.

[16] So also Pancaro (1975:530f); Smith (1995:51f). Smith also helpfully points out that "the theological, terminological, and conceptual agreements between

'THE JEWS'

This aspect of John is one of the most perplexing for those who suggest a Jewish context for John. If any feature in the Fourth Gospel suggests 'distance from Judaism,' this would have to be it. The fact that John also uses 'the Jews' in a completely neutral sense does not alter the fact that he does use it in a way that suggests that the Johannine Christians would not be happy to be known as 'Jews'. Even given their claim to the title 'Israelites', the Johannine attitude towards 'the Jews' would at first glance seem to make it difficult to class Johannine Christianity as '*Jewish* Christianity'.

What must be noted first of all in connection with this subject is that the Gospel in its present form was written in the wake of the expulsion of the Johannine Christians from the synagogue. This was clearly a traumatic event for the group, since they did not leave by choice, but were expelled. If the Johannine Christians in this context had feelings of alienation from 'Judaism', this is hardly surprising. And for this reason, to draw conclusions about the relationship of the Johannine community to Judaism prior to the expulsion on the basis of a document written in the wake of this traumatic event is as ill-advised as judging 'Jewish' views of Gentiles on the basis of literature written in the aftermath of the war of A.D. 70.[17]

However, we should note here as well that the Johannine references to 'the Jews' can be read very differently than is done by Casey. Dunn, for

---

Paul and John do not go beyond what could have been established on the basis of widely held early Christian emphases and beliefs. In other words, it is a dubious procedure to attempt to understand the theology of John as if it were a development on the basis of, and beyond, Paul" (1995:51). See further n.4 above.

[17] Cf. McKnight (1991:20). We may also ask, in light of the widespread view that expulsion from the synagogue decisively renders the Johannine Christians as 'no longer Jews' (so e.g. Barrett 1975:70), at what stage a sectarian group ceases to be part of its parent body and becomes a clearly distinct group, and whether the clarity with which we may view such issues with hindsight does not indeed obscure the real ambiguity of the situation at the time. For example, one may ask when the Methodists ceased to be Anglicans, or when Martin Luther ceased to be a Catholic. Similar questions illustrating the difficulties involved in this issue may be drawn from the whole history of Christianity as well as from the histories of other religions and groups.

example, considers that "The prominence and character of this tension between Jesus and 'the Jews' point the exegete firmly toward a mainly Jewish context for the fourth Gospel" (1991a:303; see his more detailed discussion, 1994:442f). It is also important to acknowledge, as Casey himself does (1991:187), that at least one stream of the Johannine community maintained a Jewish self-identity, referring to outsiders as 'Gentiles' (3 John 7). A far better explanation than Casey's for the phenomenon of Johannine Christianity is that its origins are firmly Jewish Christian, but that the community had to redefine itself and its identity in response to the attempt by post-70 Jewish leaders to establish their own particular form of Judaism as the dominant form, and to exclude, along with many other aspects of earlier Jewish diversity, the Johannine Christians. As Dunn concludes, "John's usage indicates not so much a clear distancing of the Johannine congregation from 'the Jews'... as an acknowledgement of a dispute over the heritage of pre-70 Jewish religion," with the Johannine Christians ceding the term 'Jews' to their opponents but keeping the term 'Israelites,' generally preferred by 'the Jews' as a self-designation, for themselves (Dunn 1992:200; cf. further on this issue: Dunn 1991a:304; 1991b:222; Meeks 1975; 1986; Pancaro 1975:494; Smiga 1992:160-171).

The Johannine use of 'the Jews' is thus best explained, not in terms of the Johannine Christians abandoning their Jewish roots, but rather in terms of the process of sect formation. The Johannine Christians refer to the Jews *en masse* because they are engaged in religious controversy of the sort which tends to produce factions and sects, and in this context such mass denunciations of one's opponents is a typical phenomenon.[18] Further, John's language of denunciation, however strong, is not correctly classed as 'anti-semitic' if we conclude that it is in fact a *Jew* who is speaking this way.[19] The Old Testament prophets frequently denounce the nation as a whole, even though they often speak alongside this of a faithful remnant who will be saved. That such images were taken up by vari-

---

[18] Freyne (1985), Johnson (1989). This is not to excuse or explain away the Johannine attitude towards the Jews, but simply to show how it is possible for this to be an attitude held by *Jewish* Christians.

[19] Barrett (1975:70) notes that "In the Fourth Gospel there is nothing stronger than the sayings of the Jew Paul: To the Jews I became as a Jew (1 Cor 9.20); and: Christ is the end of the Law (Rom 10.4)."

ous Jewish sects or parties in and around New Testament times is more than adequately attested by the literature which was found at Qumran. There, as in John, we find a group of Jews with distinctive beliefs denouncing the rest of their nation as 'children of darkness' and 'children of Beliar.' Yet in the Qumran scrolls we do not find the key term for our discussion, 'the Jews'. When we turn to the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions*, however, we do find the phrase used in a way that resembles the Johannine use. For example, in I.50 and V.11 'the Jews' is the designation used for the nation as a whole in its unbelief. It is of course true that, in general, the author does not use this phrase without qualification, speaking for the most part of 'the *unbelieving* Jews'. However, that a Jewish Christian author can present the apostle Peter as speaking about 'the Jews' as opponents, while he himself was a Jew, suggests that we should not too hastily draw conclusions concerning the nature of Johannine Christianity on the basis of the references to 'the Jews' in John's Gospel.

Before concluding our discussion of this aspect of the Fourth Gospel, we may note one further insight that may shed light on this Johannine phenomenon. Bruce Malina, in his seminal study of the cultural tendencies in the New Testament world, has pointed out that ancient Mediterranean cultures focused identity on groups rather than individuals (1981:53-60). In other words, the ancient mind tended to think in terms of what we today might call stereotypes. The individual was judged in terms of what was generally thought to be the case concerning his or her race, country, town or family. Numerous examples of this way of thinking can be found in the New Testament and other literature from the time, and it may fruitfully be suggested that the Johannine attitude to 'the Jews' is an example of the same phenomenon. The majority of Jews in John's time did not believe in Jesus, and had rejected the appeal made by Christians for them to do so. 'The Jews' as a whole could thus be considered in light of this factor and stereotyped accordingly. Just as Paul can refer to 'the Gentiles' as sinful while also apparently acknowledging that there are individual upright Gentiles,[20] so also John uses 'the Jews' to refer to the nation as a whole who do not believe, even though he is aware that there are

---

[20] Romans 2:13-16, 26. For other examples of this phenomenon see the passages cited by Malina (1981:57).

Jews who believe in Jesus, and can say that 'salvation is of the Jews' (John 4:22).

There are thus a number of important factors which are frequently overlooked in considering the use of the expression 'the Jews' in John. Through their use of this phrase, the Johannine Christians show their awareness that the religious leaders of the Jewish community from which they were expelled refused to recognize them as 'Jews.' If we are correct, with the majority of scholars, to set the Fourth Gospel in the context of Judaism as it was attempting to reformulate and redefine itself in the period after the council of Jamnia, then the Johannine Christians were probably not the only ones who felt that they were being unjustly deprived of their identity as 'Jews'. The Johannine Christians concede this title, but claim for themselves the generally preferred title 'Israel,' an unlikely procedure if the Johannine Christians were consciously and intentionally moving away from their Jewish roots and identity. The Johannine use of this phrase ('the Jews'), although distinctive, is not without parallel, as we have seen, and can be explained not only in terms of the social and historical setting of the community, but also the culture of the time. In light of the numerous factors we have reviewed, it is in no way implausible to suggest that John's Gospel is correctly classed as Jewish Christian and, rather than demonstrating distance from Judaism, represents part of the debate over 'who is a Jew?' which was so important in this period.

CONCLUSION

Given the diversity in both first century Judaism and in early Christianity, it would be reasonable to presume that there was also a certain amount of diversity in Jewish Christianity. One corollary of this is that there is no need to force John into a set mould: John could differ from a given definition of Jewish Christianity in one or more areas, and yet possibly still be rightly classed as a Jewish Christian work in some sense. Yet what is striking is the fact that it is possible to read and understand John quite naturally as containing precisely those features which have been singled out by many scholars as distinctively Jewish Christian: adoptionist Christology, Torah observance, and a continuing Jewish or Israelite self-identity. Although there is still work to be done in this area, it would seem reasonable to conclude that, in light of the evidence we have surveyed and the many other indicators of Jewish influence on and Jewish elements

in John's Gospel,[21] the burden of proof rests on those who seek to deny a Jewish/Jewish-Christian setting for the Fourth Evangelist's community and Gospel.

[21] See, e.g., the evidence presented in Quispel (1972) and in the other essays in the same volume.

REFERENCES

Alexander, Philip S.
    1992   "'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism." *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*. WUNT, Vol. 66, pp. 1-25. Ed. James D. G. Dunn. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

Ashton, John
    1991   *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Barrett, Charles K.
    1975   *The Gospel of John and Judaism*. London: SPCK.
    1978   *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Second edition). London: SPCK.
    1982   "'The Father is Greater then I' (John 14:28): Subordinationist Christology in the New Testament." *Essays on John*, pp. 19-36. London: SPCK.

Boismard, Marie-Émile
    1988   *Moise ou Jésus. Essai de Christologie Johannique*. BETL, Vol. 84. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Brown, Raymond E.
    1966   *The Gospel According to John. I-XII*. Anchor Bible, Vol. 29. New York: Doubleday.
    1979   *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
    1982   *The Epistles of John*. Anchor Bible, Vol. 30. New York: Doubleday.

Casey, Maurice
        1991   *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and
                        Development of New Testament Christology. The Edward
                        Cadbury Lectures at the University of Birmingham, 1985-
                        86.* Cambridge: James Clarke and Co.

Colpe, Carsten
        1993   "The Oldest Jewish-Christian Community." *Christian
                        Beginnings: Word and Community from Jesus to Post-
                        Apostolic Times*, pp. 75-102. Ed. Jürgen Becker. Louisville:
                        Westminster/John Knox.

Cullmann, Oscar
        1976   *The Johannine Circle. Its Place in Judaism, Among the
                        Disciples of Jesus and in Early Christianity.* London: SCM.

Dahl, Nils Alstrup
        1986   "The Johannine Church and History." *The Interpretation of
                        John*, pp. 122-140. Ed. John Ashton. Philadelphia: Fortress
                        /London: SPCK.

Daniélou, Jean
        1964   *The Theology of Jewish Christianity (A History of Early
                        Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea; v.1).*
                        London: Darton, Longman and Todd.

Dodd, C. H.
        1953   *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.* Cambridge:
                        Cambridge University Press.

Dunn, James D. G.
        1989   *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into
                        the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Second
                        edition). London: SCM.
        1990   *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament. An Inquiry into
                        the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Second edition).
                        London: SCM.
        1991a   "Let John Be John: A Gospel for Its Time." *The Gospel and
                        the Gospels*, pp. 293-322. Ed. Peter Stuhlmacher. Grand
                        Rapids: Eerdmans.
        1991b   *The Partings of the Ways Between Judaism and Christianity
                        and their Significance for the Character of Christianity.*
                        London: SCM.
        1992   "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament
                        Writings of the Period." *Jews and Christians: The Parting*

of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135. WUNT, Vol. 66, pp. 177-211. Ed.
James D. G. Dunn. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

1994   "The Making of Christology–Evolution or Unfolding?"
*Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Histori-
cal Jesus and New Testament Christology*, pp. 437-452. Ed.
Joel B. Green and Max Turner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Edwards, Ruth B.
1988   "CARIN ANTI CARITOS (John 1.16): Grace and Law in
the Johannine Prologue." *Journal for the Study of the
New Testament* 32:3-15.

Freyne, Sean
1985   "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and
John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus." *"To See Ourselves
as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late
Antiquity*, pp. 117-143. Ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S.
Frerichs. Chico: Scholars Press.

Fuller, Reginald H.
1990   "Lower and Higher Christology in the Fourth Gospel." *The
Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in
Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, pp. 357-365. Ed. R. T. Fortna
and B. R. Gaventa. Nashville: Abingdon.

Hofrichter, Peter
1992   "Logoslehre und Gottesbild bei Apologeten, Modalisten
und Gnostikern. Johanneische Christologie im Lichte ihrer
frühesten Rezeption." *Monotheismus und Christologie:
Zur Gottesfrage im Hellenistischen Judentum und im
Urchristentum*. Quaestiones Disputatae, 138, pp. 186-217.
Ed. Hans-Josef Klauck. Freiberg: Herder.

Johnson, Luke T.
1989   "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the
Conventions of Ancient Polemic." *Journal of Biblical
Literature* 108:419-441.

Malina, Bruce J.
1981   *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural
Anthropology*. Atlanta: John Knox.

Martyn, J. Louis
1977a "Glimpses into the History of the Johannine Community."
L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie.

BETL, Vol. 44, pp. 149-175. Ed. M. de Jonge. Leuven:
Leuven University Press.

1977b   "Clementine Recognitions 1,33-71, Jewish Christianity, and
the Fourth Gospel." *God's Christ and His People:
Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, pp. 265-295. Ed.
Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks. Oslo:
Universitetsforlaget.

1979   *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Second
edition). Nashville: Abingdon.

McKnight, Scot
1991   *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity
in the Second Temple Period.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Meeks, Wayne A.
1967   *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine
Christology.* Supplements to Novum Testamentum, Vol.
XIV. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

1975   "'Am I a Jew?'– Johannine Christianity and Judaism."
*Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults:
Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty. Part One: New Testa-
ment.* Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, Vol. 12, pp.
163-186. Ed. Jacob Neusner. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

1986   "The Man From Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism." *The
Interpretation of John*, pp. 141-173. Ed. J. Ashton.
Philadelphia: Fortress/London: SPCK.

1990   "Equal to God." *The Conversation Continues: Studies in
Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, pp. 309-321.
Ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa. Nashville:
Abingdon.

Menken, Maarten J. J.
1993   "The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: A Survey of Recent
Research." *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and
New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de
Jonge.* Journal for the Study of the New Testament—
Supplemental Series, Vol. 84, pp. 292-320. Ed. Martinus
C. De Boer. JSOT/Sheffield Academic Press.

Neusner, Jacob
1993   *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic
Reply to Professor E. P. Sanders.* South Florida Studies
in the History of Judaism, Vol. 84. Atlanta: Scholars
Press.

Overman, J. Andrew
1990 *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Pancaro, Severino
1975 *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John.* Supplements to Novum Testamentum, Vol. 42. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Quispel, Gilles
1972 "Qumran, John and Jewish Christianity." *John and Qumran*, pp. 137-155. Ed. James H. Charlesworth. London: Geoffrey Chapman.

Riegel, Stanley K.
1977 "Jewish Christianity: Definitions and Terminology." *New Testament Studies* 24:410-415.

Schnelle, Udo
1992 *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John: An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Schoeps, Hans-Joachim
1949 *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums.* Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr (Paul Siebeck).
1956 *Urgemeinde, Judenchristentums, Gnosis.* Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

Schoonenberg, Piet
1986 "A Sapiential Reading of John's Prologue: Some Reflections on Views of Reginald Fuller and James Dunn." *Theology Digest* 33:403-21.

Schuchard, Bruce G.
1992 *Scripture Within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John.* Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, Vol. 133. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Scroggs, Robin
1988 *Christology in Paul and John: the Reality and Revelation of God.* Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Smiga, George M.
    1992   *Pain and Polemic: Anti-Judaism in the Gospels.*
                 Mahwah: Paulist.

Smith, D. Moody
    1990   "The Contribution of J. Louis Martyn to the Understanding
                 of the Gospel of John." *The Conversation Continues:
                 Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn,*
                 pp. 275-294. Ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa.
                 Nashville: Abingdon.
    1995   *The Theology of the Gospel of John.* New Testament
                 Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strecker, Georg
    1981   *Das Judenchristentums in den Pseudoklementinen.* Texte
                 und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen
                 Literatur, 70^2. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

Stuckenbruck, Loren T.
    1995   *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early
                 Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John.*
                 WUNT, 2nd series, Vol. 70. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul
                 Siebeck).

Talbert, Charles H.
    1992   *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary
                 on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles.*
                 London: SPCK.
    1993   "'And the Word Became Flesh': When?" *The Future of
                 Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck,* pp.
                 43-52. Ed. Abraham J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks.
                 Minneapolis: Fortress.

Watson, Francis
    1987   "Is John's Christology Adoptionist?" *The Glory of Christ in
                 the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of
                 G.B.Caird,* pp. 113-124. Ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright.
                 Oxford: Clarendon.

Whitacre, Rodney A.
    1982   *Johannine Polemic: The Role of Tradition and Theol-
                 ogy.* Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, Vol.
                 67. Chico: Scholars Press.

Mary Magdalene: Gnostic Revealer

LAURA HOBGOOD-OSTER

THE FIGURE OF MARY MAGDALENE APPEARS FREQUENTLY IN A VARIETY OF NAG Hammadi texts including *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Dialogue of the Savior*, *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* and the book which bears her name *The Gospel of Mary*. Scholars have developed a general consensus regarding her role in these texts as symbolic of the "Gnostic" community in opposition with the "orthodox" community, usually symbolized by Peter.

The occurrence of several direct conflicts between Peter and Mary is the proof for this widely accepted symbolic relationship. As Karen King states in her introduction to *The Gospel of Mary*:

> The confrontation of Mary with Peter, a scenario also found in *The Gospel of Thomas*, *Pistis Sophia*, and *The Gospel of the Egyptians*, reflects some of the tensions in second-century Christianity. (King 1988:524)[1]

---

[1] All citations from Nag Hammadi texts will be taken from *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James Robinson. They will be noted, parenthetically, in the text of the essay. The page and line number of that particular text in the Nag Hammadi collection will follow each citation.

Pheme Perkins echoes the same conclusion:

> These passages witness to a well-established tradition about the
> conflict between the apostle Peter and the Gnostic Mary. Peter is
> always portrayed as the irascible opponent of Gnosis who represents
> orthodox, anti-Gnostic polemic. (Perkins 1980:141)

If one studies the literature regarding both the Dialogues and the Gospels included in the text of the Nag Hammadi library, this thesis will be offered consistently, almost as if taken for granted or accepted as a given, and indeed the representational theories do point to significant themes in second and third century Gnosticism.[2]

However, a careful examination of passages in several of the Nag Hammadi texts indicates that this symbolic representation is not the sole, or even the main, purpose of the inclusion of the figure of Mary Magdalene in the narratives. Obviously the exoteric meaning is apparent, and the concept, well-defined by Douglas Parrott, of grouping certain disciples as "orthodox," thus symbolizing the "orthodox" tradition, and others as "Gnostic" is evident. The "orthodox" disciples, often portrayed as blundering and stupid, fail to grasp the knowledge which the Savior is transmitting. Granted the symbolic role of Gnostic, Mary Magdalene assumes a position of prominence and of respect. As a matter of fact the presence of the figure of Mary Magdalene suggests that women were accepted as challengers to orthodoxy, thus as primary leaders in Gnosticism.[3]

---

[2] See also Parrott (1988:221). There he states, "Philip, Matthew, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Mary reflect a tradition within Gnosticism of disciples who are distinctively Gnostic, and who are contrasted with some regularity, and in various ways, with 'orthodox' disciples (principally, Peter and John)." He concludes,"This study has sought to demonstrate that early in the Christian Gnostic movement a circle of disciples of Jesus was chosen to be the bearers of the distinctive Christian-Gnostic message, while at the same time another group was identified with the orthodox position" (1986:142). In addition Pheme Perkins says, "As in *Gmary*, *Gth* and *PS*, the presence of women among the disciples serve as a surrogate for Gnostic possession of non-apostolic tradition" (1980:142). Finally see Elaine Pagels: "Other secret texts use the figure of Mary Magdalene to suggest that women's activity challenged the leaders of the orthodox community, who regarded Peter as their spokesman" (1979:64).

[3] See particularly *Pistis Sophia*, *Gospel of Mary* and *Gospel of Philip*.

But a new portrait of the Gnostic Mary Magdalene emerges when the texts are studied in their entirety. Rather than epitomizing the role of the Gnostic disciple as opposed to the orthodox, and thus the superior Gnostic tradition, she is portrayed as a primary teacher, revealer and spiritual guide within the Gnostic tradition of formation. In other words, her role goes beyond a symbolic challenge to orthodoxy. Mary Magdalene embodies the central position of leader and teacher within Gnostic circles.

This paper will seek to examine the development of Mary Magdalene in the role of *Revealer* by studying several late second and early third century texts in the Nag Hammadi library, specifically *The Gospel of Mary*, *The Gospel of Philip*, *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* and *The Dialogue with the Savior*. These texts will be reviewed in light of the definition of the "spiritual guide" developed by Richard Valantasis in his work, *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of the Guide-Disciple Relationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermitism, and Gnosticism*.

DEFINITION OF TEACHER/REVEALER

In the second chapter of his published thesis, *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century*, Richard Valantasis develops a definition of the role of the spiritual guide or teacher and of the student-teacher relationship which "ends in the planting of a salvific spark into the student's psyche." In this relationship the revealer figure is involved in a myth of ascent and descent during which a "transfer" of the divine occurs. The teacher, or revealer, then becomes "godlike." Valantasis points out that this mythic ascent to divinity is not a metaphor exclusive to Gnostic communities, it is also constructed within Platonic educational practices and can thus be assumed to be formative within the world view of the Hellenistic culture of the time, the culture which recorded the Nag Hammadi texts in question (Valantasis 1990:17).

Consequently, an intimate relationship is developed between the revealer and the student. The revealer has become a hearer or friend of God through this communion with the divine spirit and becomes a "mouthpiece," "relating what s/he hears from God in the inner sanctum of his/her participation in the divine being" (Valantasis 1990:25).[4]

[4] Inclusive language has been used for the purposes of this essay, since

Another significant aspect of the intimate relationship formed between the spiritual guide and the disciple is the sexuality which is involved. The planting of the spark within the soul is identified with love. Valantasis suggests that the Gnostic term "spark" has sexual meaning because of its generative signification. It carries the connotations of seed and of love. The revealer binds the student sexually through the passing of the divine spark. Indeed the Gnostic imagery of the bridal chamber and of other sexual metaphorical and sacramental systems tends to support this aspect of the relationship of the divine and of the revealer to the transmission of knowledge.

> The sexual image of the spark, of love, and of the bond underlines the mythic structuring of the educational process. The role and function of the teacher is set in the context of his/her ascent to the divine realm and his/her election there. From there the teacher returns to plant the divine spark in the student: the teacher, thus, becomes the savior, the Gnostic logos, the means of salvation, the lover. (Valantasis 1990:30)

The emphasis on sexuality and its role in the educational process within Gnosticism is further illuminated by Richard Smith:

> Salvation comes to this world as a penis enters a woman. More frequently than the genital itself, salvation is described as a result from the secretion of the male genital organ, the semen. The language frequently used to describe the state of salvation is language that is invariably used by the medical writers to describe the male semen: power, form, perfection ... Gnostic sexual metaphor is repeated with little variation throughout the literature. The semen comes down, and upward return the perfected souls. (Smith 1988:358)

This metaphorical, or possibly enacted, sexual relationship between guide/revealer and student is central to Gnostic formation experience (Valantasis 1990:76-86).

---

the topic deals directly with a feminine figure. The original work focused solely on male formation, thus masculine language was employed.

The next role inherent in the teacher is that of savior, but a savior by teaching and prayer as opposed to the savior of all. Valantasis states that the mythic, revelatory, and salvific connotative systems of signification about the teacher are brought together and the teacher becomes "revealer" (Valantasis 1990:33). Divinity is then placed within the student who consequently becomes a divine guide or revealer.

Thus the role of teacher/revealer and student within Gnosticism includes the following characteristics: (1) the myth of ascent/descent to the divine, (2) the intimate sexual relationship between the divine revealer and the student which transmits the divine spark, (3) the role of teacher/revealer as mouthpiece or prophet for the divine, (4) the transformation of student into teacher/revealer.

Based on this description the Gnostic Mary Magdalene can easily be characterized as the student of the actual savior, Jesus, who is the revealer and passes on the role of revealer to Mary Magdalene. She then becomes the teacher/prophet/revealer for the other disciples who are gathered around her.

MARY MAGDALENE AS REVEALER

In order to discover the true character of the Gnostic Mary Magdalene as Revealer we will proceed by approaching the four suggested roles of the revealer offered by Valantasis in light of the Nag Hammadi Dialogues and Gospels which describe this disciple.

The first stage in the development of the revealer in the Gnostic formation system includes the "practice of migration godwards" through which "the teacher becomes divine, and returns from that divine region to pass on the benefits received from that translation" (Valantasis 1990:17). In *The Gospel of Mary* a vision and an ascension experience which conform precisely to this migration godwards are described. First, when questioned by Peter regarding her knowledge of the Lord Mary responds:

> I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him, 'Lord, I saw you today in a vision.' He answered and said to me, 'Blessed are you, that you did not waver at the sight of me. For where the mind is, there is the treasure.' I said to him, 'Lord, now does he who sees the vision see it through the soul or through the spirit?' The Savior answered and said, 'He does not see through the soul nor through the spirit, but the mind

which is between the two - that is what sees the vision and it is....'
(10.10-25)

The mind of Mary has ascended to the Lord since she did see him in a
vision. She has found the treasure.

More obvious language regarding this ascension lies in the next
pericope:

> And desire that, 'I did not see you descending, but now I see you
> ascending. Why do you lie, since you belong to me?' The soul an-
> swered and said, 'I saw you' ... Again it came to the third power,
> which is called ignorance ... When the soul had overcome the third
> power, it went upwards and saw the fourth power, (which) took seven
> forms ... These are the seven powers of wrath. They ask the soul,
> 'Whence do you come, slayer of men, or where are you going, con-
> queror of space?' The soul answered and said, 'What binds me has
> been slain, and what surrounds me has been overcome, and my desire
> has been ended, and ignorance has died. In a world I was released
> from a world, and in a type from a heavenly type and from the fetter
> of oblivion which is transient. From this time on will I attain to the
> rest of the time, of the season, of the aeon in silence.' (15.1-17.7)

At this point in the narrative several of the disciples question the validity
of Mary's ascension experience. She responds by affirming that it is the
truth, she has not "thought this up" in her heart.

In another text, *The Dialogue of the Savior*, an image of Mary in con-
versation with the Lord in a special place, though that place is not quali-
fied, is presented:

> Mary said, "Tell me, Lord, why I have come to this place, to profit or
> to forfeit." (140.14-16)

Although it is not necessarily established as an ascension experience, the
dialogue which follows assumes a place where revelation is occurring:

> The Lord said, "I have told you that it is the one who can see who
> reveals."

> The Lord said, "...everything which I have ... you will ... you ... everything."
> Mary said, "There is but one saying I will speak to the Lord concerning the mystery of truth: In this have we taken our stand, and to the cosmic are we transparent." (142.20-24)

Mary and the Lord are in a "cosmic" setting and "everything" is being revealed.

Finally, in *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* the ascension metaphor is intimated when Mary is called away by the Savior:

> Mary said to him: "Lord, then how will we know that?" The Perfect Savior said: "Come from invisible things to the end of those that are visible, and the very emanation of thought will reveal to you how faith in those things that are not visible was found in those that are visible, those that belong to Unbegotten Father. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear." (98.9-22)

Thus the image of Mary experiencing ascension to the divine realm and receiving knowledge there from the Savior is attested in a variety of Gnostic texts.

The second qualification for the teacher is the act of becoming "lover" of the divine or of the guide. The bond of love "underlines the mythic structuring of the educational process" (Valatasis 1990: 30). The role of Mary Magdalene as lover of the Lord is apparent throughout the texts mentioned. In *The Gospel of Philip* the symbol of the kiss is used to imply this sexual relationship:

> [Jesus says:] And had the word gone out from that place it would be nourished from the mouth and it would become perfect. For it is by a kiss that the perfect conceive and give birth. For this reason we also kiss one another. We receive conception from the grace which is in one another. (58.34-59.6)

Thus knowledge, or the word, is passed on through the kiss. Later in the *The Gospel of Philip* Jesus' direct relationship with Mary Magdalene is described in the following manner:

> And the companion of the [...] Mary Magdalene. [...loved] her more
> than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her [often] on her [...].
> (63.32-35)

Not only did Jesus kiss Mary Magdalene, but he kissed her often. The
critique may be raised at this point concerning the missing word when
relating the Lord to Mary Magdalene as companion. This however is
qualified earlier in this text:

> There were three who always walked with the Lord: Mary his mother
> and her sister and Magdalene, the one who was called his compan-
> ion. His sister and his mother and his companion were each a Mary.
> (59.6-11)

Again this implied sexual relationship is confirmed in another text, *The
Gospel of Mary*, by two of the disciples. First Peter addresses Mary
by saying:

> Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of women.
> (10.1-3)

Later the disciple Levi clarifies and strengthens the recognition of this
relationship between the Lord and Mary when he says:

> Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more
> than us. (18.12-14)

Not only does the Savior love Mary Magdalene more than the rest of
women, but he loved her more than the other disciples. Both the language
of affection expressed in the *The Gospel of Mary* and the sexual imagery
of the kiss in the *The Gospel of Philip* affirm the intimate sexual relation-
ship between the divine revealer (the Lord) and the student (Mary
Magdalene). Thus the divine spark is passed through this implied sexual
relationship.

The third and fourth characteristics of teacher are that of mouth-
piece or prophet for the divine, and that of transformation from the
student into the revealer. Although up until this point the role of
teacher has been fulfilled by the Lord, and that of student by Mary

Magdalene, the role of revealer now shifts to Mary. As stated by Valantasis, "The disciple has become a guide" (Valantasis 1990:30). *The Gospel of Mary* tells us that Mary led the disciples in discussion and "turned their hearts to the Good" (9.22-23). Further, Peter asks her to share the wisdom which the Savior has given to her:

> Tell us the words of the Savior which you remember - which you know (but) we do not, nor have we heard them.
> Mary answered and said, "What is hidden from you I will proclaim to you." (10.4-8)

The Lord also establishes her, actually names her, as a revealer in *The Dialogue of the Savior*:

> Mary said, "Everything established thus is seen."
> The Lord said, "I have told you that it is the one who can see who reveals." (142.20-21)

Mary is the one who has seen, and thus is the one who is now able to reveal. She has become the mouthpiece for the divine and she has taken on the role of teacher.

Thus, not only is Mary a Revealer, but she has been led into this role by the Lord. In other words, she is the heiress of his wisdom and the Lord himself is portrayed as her spiritual guide. *The Gospel of Thomas* alludes to this relationship:

> Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life."
> Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males." (15.18-25; Saying 114)

She has taken on this role of her own volition, as is made clear in *The Dialogue of the Savior* when Mary says:

> I want to understand all things, just as they are. (141.2)

She is accepted by the Lord as worthy fulfilling this role when he says to her:

> You make clear the abundance of the revealer! (140.17)

CONCLUSION

Although there is definitely validity to the argument that the confrontations between Mary Magdalene and Peter symbolize the Gnostic/orthodox division which was a dominating factor in the life of the second/third century Christian ethos, that is not the only or the most significant role which Mary Magdalene holds in Gnostic texts. Amidst a predominately male community and an educational structure which was guided by the concept of male formation, Mary Magdalene fills the significant role of Revealer. Not only has she experienced valid spiritual formation and been led through the necessary steps to qualify her as a revealer, but she was formed by the Savior. Her guide was the Lord, who then qualified her to serve as Revealer to others. Attributing this formative experience to a woman in this time period is revolutionary and provides further hints at the possibility of female educational structures existing within Gnostic communities. But these female systems of formation, as attested by the evidence that portrays Mary teaching the male disciples, was not necessarily exclusively female. It could be claimed from this evidence, and from the obvious development of Mary in the role of guide/revealer, that women were actually spiritual guides for men in some cases. Such a dynamic could lead to a new evaluation of the spiritual formation and educational system in place in second/third century Gnosticism, and possibly elsewhere within the Hellenistic world. Attributing the possibility of this function to the character of Mary Magdalene in Gnostic texts is at least as significant, if not more so, than placing her in other metaphorical roles.

REFERENCES

King, Karen L.
    1988   Introduction to *The Gospel of Mary* in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 523-524. Ed. James M. Robinson. San Francisco: Harper.

Pagels, Elaine.
    1979   *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Random House.

Parrott, Douglas M.
    1986   "Gnostic and Orthodox Disciples." *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, pp. 193-219. Eds. Charles Hedrick and Robert Hodgson. Peabody: Hendrickson.
    1988   Introduction to *The Sophia of Jesus Christ* in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, pp. 220-221. Ed. James M. Robinson. San Francisco: Harper.

Perkins, Pheme
    1980   *The Gnostic Dialogue: The Early Church and the Crisis of Gnosticism*. New York: Paulist.

Robinson, James M.
    1988   Ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. San Francisco: Harper.

Smith, Richard.
    1988   "Sex Education in Gnostic Schools." *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, pp. 345-360. Ed. Karen King. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Valantasis, Richard.
    1990   *Spiritual Guides of the Third Century: A Semiotic Study of the Guide-Disciple Relationship in Christianity, Neoplatonism, Hermitism, and Gnosticism*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Wittgenstein's Ancient City:

Intersubjective Meaning and the Question of Fideism

MARK RALLS

MY GOAL IN THIS ESSAY IS TO MAKE A CASE FOR AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF Wittgenstein's later philosophy.[1] Many contemporary interpreters of Wittgenstein in the philosophy of religion and in theology, such as D. Z. Phillips, Norman Malcolm, and George Lindbeck, tend to place a priority upon his remarks concerning language games.[2] This widespread emphasis upon language games has led Wittgenstein's later philosophy to be associated with varying degrees of epistemic isolationism. This line of interpretation is evident not only in those who attempt to follow Wittgenstein's guidance toward various expressions of such isolation but also in the writings of his harshest critics who have made popular the misconception that Wittgenstein, himself, adopted the extreme isolationist position of fideism.

---

[1] This essay could not have been written without the insight and encouragement provided by Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen during the course "Wittgenstein and Religious Epistemology." I am grateful for the critical reading he provided of an earlier version of this essay.

[2] This misplaced emphasis upon language games in contemporary philosophy of religion was also noted by Joseph M. Incandela in his essay, "The Appropriation of Wittgenstein's Work by Philosophers of Religion: Toward a Re-evaluation and an End." in *Religious Studies*. Vol.21, no.4 (December 1985) pp.457-474.

It is my contention that if the *Philosophical Investigations* are read in light of Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophy as therapy then his remarks concerning language games can be seen not as a portrayal of our cultural reality but as merely one therapeutic strategy among others designed to "dissolve the knots in our thinking." If Wittgenstein's therapeutic intentions are employed as an interpretive principle, an alternative reading of his later philosophy comes into view. This reading of the *Philosophical Investigations* moves away from expressions of epistemic isolationism and toward a recognition of the intersubjective character of meaning that is expressed in Wittgenstein's metaphoric portrayal of philosophy as an ancient city.

In order to support my argument that such an alternative reading is viable, I will consider the therapeutic strategies found in three sections of the *Investigations* which are often ignored in contemporary religious discourse. I will then place these strategies in conversation with the epistemological reflections of W. V. O. Quine and Charles Taylor. Yet, before my own reading of Wittgenstein can be presented, it is necessary to consider first his therapeutic attempt to cure the illusions of modern epistemology and the predominant direction in which the achievements of his later philosophy are presently interpreted.

A THERAPEUTIC PHILOSOPHY

The publication of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* marked a redirection of the modern epistemological tradition. Rather than following Descartes, Locke, and Hume in justifying beliefs through the proper use of rational faculties, Wittgenstein posited what might be termed a social epistemology with the claim that rationality is constituted by social practices and that justification of belief takes place in a common linguistic arena.

He directs his readers to a recognition of this arena by depicting the philosophical pursuit of meaning with the metaphor of an ancient city with "its maze of alleys and plazas, old and new houses and houses with additions from various periods; all this surrounded by a number of new suburbs, straight regular streets and uniform houses" (Wittgenstein 1958, section 18). This metaphor provides an interpretive key unlocking both his relationship to modern epistemology and his approach to philosophy as therapy designed to cure his readers of the epistemic ills of the modern

tradition by persuading them to begin the quest for meaning "at the be-
ginning" without attempting "to go further back" (Wittgenstein 1969:
section 471).

Following this metaphor, modern epistemology may be seen as the
surrounding new suburbs characterized by the quest to escape the
confusion at the heart of the ancient city through the peculiarly modern
ideal that knowledge is an inner representation of an independent,
external reality.[3] By locating meaning in mental images or ideas, the
modern tradition assumes that meaning is something essential, existing in
a mysterious ineffable realm of the mind. As a result language is viewed
as a hopelessly inadequate vehicle of knowledge never fully capable to
convey the meaning of an idea (High 1968). In this way, modern episte-
mologists presuppose a dualism between the way words are used and
what words really mean, thus, rendering any connection between
thought, language and world an achievement of metaphysical subtlety.
Underlying their confidence that such an achievement is possible lies the
modern ideal of the individual as a rational designer who can achieve
certainty by ordering his or her thoughts according to distinct epistemic
connections--an order that is analogous to the straight streets and
uniform houses of the suburbs.

Wittgenstein's later philosophy is perhaps best understood as an attack
upon this confidence that meaning occurs not in a common linguistic
arena but "further back" in the ineffable realm of an individual's mind. To
overcome this misplaced confidence in epistemic order, Wittgenstein
sought to turn our attention away from the metaphysical pursuit of estab-
lishing an essential foundation for meaning in order that we might recog-
nize the everyday use of language. As a result, he redirected the quest for
meaning away from the orderly suburbs located in the mind of the ratio-
nal individual to its true "beginning" in the common linguistic arena of
the ancient city.

By locating the beginning of this quest in the "confusing maze of al-
leys and plazas" that comprise our shared linguistic reality, Wittgenstein
recasts the role of the philosopher from the solitary rational designer of
orderly epistemic paths to the guide who directs others through an "im-
mense landscape that they cannot possibly know their way around"

---

[3] Charles Taylor provides an illuminating critique of this tradition in his es-
say, "Overcoming Epistemology" (Taylor 1995:1-19).

(Monk 1990:502). This understanding of the goals of philosophy is, it-self, a departure from the modern tradition. Leaving behind the pursuits of a positive science, he reconceives philosophy as a therapy which does not seek to propose anything new, but rather attempts to cure the intellectual ills of the past which have lead us down the wrong path in pursuit of essential foundations and away from the surface of lived reality where thought, language, and world are intertwined in ordinary communication.

Wittgenstein once provided an illustration of his therapeutic intentions while lecturing to a group of students at Cambridge:

> In teaching you philosophy I'm like a guide showing you how to find your way round London ... After I have taken you on many journeys through the city, in all sorts of directions, we shall have passed through any given street a number of times .... At the end of this you will know London; you will be able to find your way about like a born Londoner. (Monk 1990:502)

Employing the image of a city to depict the philosophical quest for mean-ing, Wittgenstein provided a cure for our metaphysical passions--a cure that is to be found only by following the winding paths of the way words are actually used in the course of everyday life.

For Wittgenstein, only this return to the heart of the ancient city can challenge the philosophical craving for generality. Absolving us of that philosophical torment which makes us "feel [that] we don't know our way around where we ought to go" (Incandela 1985:495), Wittgenstein redirects us away from the hopeless attempt to descend beneath our ordi-nary linguistic world in search of a single, explanatory foundation. He cures us of those peculiarly modern ills which lead to the modern rejec-tion of the ambiguous, the concrete and the particular in favor of a quix-otic pursuit of clearly defined universal abstractions.

Once we accept Wittgenstein's guidance along the "twisted and ir-regular" ways that language is used in our everyday lives, the modern as-sumption that there is a orderly, universal form of life gradually slips out of view. With this recognition, our epistemological foundations are pulled out from under us leaving us with a choice between two directions of in-terpreting Wittgenstein's guidance. We may follow the predominant inter-pretation of his philosophy which merely appropriates his achievements

into a disguised form of our modern pursuit for order by constructing the straight highways of an isolationist position that divides the nebulous mass of human language into manageable boroughs or we may follow Wittgenstein along a different path back to the ambiguity, concreteness and particularity of our shared linguistic arena. If we "begin" our quest from this "beginning," any interpretation which moves toward fideism is called into question as we recognize the dynamic web of overlapping discourses where forms of life converge and continually re-form in response to the intersubjective character of meaning.

THE QUESTION OF FIDEISM

In response to David Tracy's depiction of George Lindbeck as a theological fideist, Kenneth Surin asserted that those who make the accusation of fideism must specify their meaning of the term (Surin 1988:189). In a essay on Wittgenstein, it is appropriate to recognize that we can only get a sense of the meaning of fideism by considering how it is used. In contemporary academic discourse, "fideism" seems to be used not merely as a descriptive term but as an accusation. Specifically, it is used as an indictment accusing certain philosophers and theologians, who may or may not be accurately termed fideist, as adopting some variation of epistemic isolationism.[4]

This accusation can have different targets in different situations. For example, when David Tracy made this accusation against George Lindbeck, he seems to have used the term to indicate Lindbeck's apparent unwillingness to ground his reflections in any foundations outside the

---

[4] This is simply to point out that an accusation of fideism does not render the philosopher or theologian in question guilty of taking this epistemic shortcut. A "purely" fideistic position, if such is actually possible, would be one that responds to the challenge that reason poses to faith by merely positing the repristinizaton of the primacy of faith pretending in a sense that the Enlightenment never occurred. The philosopher who may come closest to this characterization might be the sixteenth century French Calvinist, Pierre Bayle. In his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* he consistently posited an opposition between faith and reason - an opposition which reached its clearest articulation in his discussion of "Phyrro" where he argued that self-evidence, the most reliable forms of truth-claims, were incompatible with the revelation of the Christian faith because some of them contradicted the tenets of Christian doctrine.

Biblical narrative (Tracy 1985:469). And when Kai Nielson described D.Z. Phillips and Paul Holmer as "Wittgensteinian fideists," he pointed to their unwillingness to allow religious practices to be judged by any criteria of intelligibility external to the practices themselves (Nielson 1992:116-17). From these examples it can be seen that "fideism" is generally used in contemporary religious discourse as an indictment against those who seemingly fall back upon the logical autonomy and conceptual self-sufficiency of religious belief in order to compartmentalize this belief from all other beliefs and practices.[5]

Those who are accused of fideism often seek to support their position by claiming its roots in Wittgenstein's later philosophy drawing explicit attention to his remarks concerning language games. For example Norman Malcolm has claimed that religious viewpoints are "analogous to Wittgenstein's remarks about language games." They both contain "framework principles" which provide boundaries for all their rational operations so that the assertion of hypotheses, justification, and the search for evidence "all occur within a system." Thus, according to Malcolm, religion is like what Wittgenstein called a "language game" - it is "neither reasonable nor unreasonable" (Malcolm 1992:93-94).

A similar interpretation can be seen in a recent work by D.Z. Phillips where he criticized Reformed philosophers for positing a "common ground" through their assertion that unbelievers, like believers themselves, can be called the imago Dei since both share a "remnant knowledge of God." For Phillips, the imago Dei is "a religious notion having its sense within a religious perspective." In light of this position, he concludes that Reformed philosophers fall into confusion by placing religion into an "explanatory relation to other possibilities of belief and unbelief." In distinction, Phillips opts for what he considers to be Wittgenstein's recognition that truth claims can only "be provided within our language games" (Phillips 1988:91).

Following Kai Nielson's influential essay of 1967 entitled, "Wittgensteinian Fideism," religious isolationism has consistently been associated with Wittgenstein's own philosophical aims. In this essay,

---

[5] Logical autonomy entails that the justification of religious assertions of belief and judgment does not depend on support from what is justifiably believed by those outside its ranks while conceptual self-sufficiency claims that religious concepts cannot be defined on the basis of external concepts.

Nielson described the "central plank" of Wittgensteinian fideism to be rooted in Wittgenstien's own claim that logic is "dictated by the norms of intelligibility embedded in the modes of social life." Since these social norms determine the "criteria of logical appraisal," Wittgensteinian fideists can claim that religion, science, and common sense are different forms of life constituting distinct modes of discourse with an "intelligibility" that is peculiar to themselves (Nielson 1967:204). Nancy Frankenberry expressed a similar position with her observation that the contemporary position that religious beliefs are commitments which cannot be justified "has taken hold chiefly through the influence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy (Frankenberry 1988:8). In like manner, Roger Trigg has discussed Wittgenstein's relationship to those contemporary forms of relativism which make it "logically impossible to step outside every conceptual system" leaving us "imprisoned within our own system" (Trigg 1973:6).

Despite their common critique concerning the "roots" of contemporary isolationist positions, it is not necessary to follow Nielson, Frankenberry, and Trigg in their rejection of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. Nor is it necessary to assume that an acceptance of Wittgenstein necessitates following Malcolm and Phillips into varying degrees of religious isolationism. A third option is also available which seeks to interpret Wittgenstein's later work in light of his own goal to provide a philosophical therapy to cure us of our anxious quest for epistemic order. This alternative reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy questions the popular assumption that to be a Wittgensteinian is to adopt a philosophical position that moves in a direction toward fideism. By examining the following sections in the *Investigations*, I will consider three therapeutic strategies designed to persuade us to begin our quest for meaning in the shared linguistic arena which Wittgenstein depicted as the heart of an ancient city. These strategies build upon one another to assert that the depth of meaning is found in the shared agreement in forms of life, that the limits of meaning are socially established through collective judgments and finally that the breadth of meaning extends beyond the fluid "borders" of an individual form of life. As these strategies are placed in conversation with two recent attempts to move beyond modern epistemology, a recognition of the intersubjective character of meaning gradually comes into clearer focus.

THE DEPTH MEANING

"How is he to know what color he is to pick out when he hears red? ... 'Red' means the color that occurs to me when I hear the word 'red' - would be a *definition*. Not an explanation of *what it is* to use a word as a name ... Disputes do no break out ... over the question whether a rule has been obeyed or not... That is part of the framework on which the working of our language is based... It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* that they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in forms of life." (Wittgenstein 1958:sections 239-241)

In sections 239-241, the seed of Wittgenstein's social epistemology is revealed in his insistence that what we experience as the depth of meaning resides in agreement in forms of life. Wittgenstein begins this exchange with his interlocutor with the claim that calling a particular color red does not refer to a mental image that corresponds to redness, but points to the fact that one has mastered the technique of using the word "red" correctly (Wittgenstein 1958:sections 239-240). With the claim that no mediating criteria is needed to justify using the word "red" in a particular situation, Wittgenstein provides a thumbnail sketch of his later philosophy that opens the way for understanding judgment as a contextual and social process. With a seemingly cryptic aphorism about our philosophical desire to define the word "red," Wittgenstein reminds us of "one ... of the bumps that the understanding got by running its head up against the limits of language" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 119).

By turning away from the futile effort of defining red as "the color which occurs to him when he hears the word," Wittgenstein turns our attention to the ordinary use of a word like "red." Here in everyday discourse, there is no attempt to define "red" and no dispute whether one is using the word "red" correctly. In this way, the ordinary meaning of "red" is established by an agreement of the way it is to be used. The depth of this agreement extends to the common linguistic arena which those who use the word "red" tacitly share with one another. We experience a depth of its meaning due to our shared certainty of what the word "red" "means." G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker have described this common ex-

perience as a "groundless certainty" established by those applications of words employed by a community that "presuppose a general consensus." Such certainty is groundless because "its foundation does not lie in an ineffable image of redness in our mind," but in the way that a community agrees to use its words (Barker and Hacker 1985:254). Yet, it remains certain because we can use the word "red" in our everyday discourse without having to ponder whether we are using it correctly.

With this strategic redirection away from the assumption that the depth of meaning lies in the recesses of the mind, Wittgenstein points us toward the informal negotiations which take place within the nexus of ordinary communication. These negations rely on a consensus, upon what Baker and Hacker describe as a "peaceful agreement" which provides a "framework condition" for the operations of ordinary language. This "peaceful agreement" of common ways of acting in certain circumstances makes "mutual understanding" possible and provides an "established pattern of justifying our beliefs" (Baker and Hacker 1985:254-55).

This does not mean that human agreement decides what is true and false. Rather, Wittgenstein claims that it goes deeper than shared notions of what is true or false. It "is not agreement in opinions but in form of life" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 241). It is an inter-subjective meaning found in the complex matrix of the form of life which seems natural to us. This agreement gives us freedom, allowing us to go through everyday life without concerning ourselves whether a particular sports car is really "red." We are freed from philosophical confusion by shared meanings that we have in common with others - meanings which provide us with certainty because they are as fundamental and taken for granted as the air that we breathe.

This shared depth of meannig offers a wider notion of rationality than the Cartesian model of the rational individual as well as the linguistic extension of this model that places meaning in a mysterious ineffable region in the mind. In contrast, Wittgenstein depicts a social epistemology that depends upon those shared linguistic assumptions which seem so natural to us that they place us in a common web of meaning, in a form of life, which is constituted by the dynamic use of ordinary language where we express thoughts, defend propositions and make judgments. In this way, Wittgenstein hopes to redirect our search for truth away from a mythical essence that undergirds human reality to the dynamic life-world of our

shared linguistic arena. If we accept the difficult task of observing those ordinary communications whose "importance" is "hidden" in their "familiarity" then we can recognize that meaning is not contained in a foundational essence anymore than the word "red" is defined by "redness" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 129).

THE LIMITS OF MEANING

"To say 'This combination of words makes no sense' excludes it from the sphere of language and thereby bounds the domain of language. But when one draws a boundary it may be for various kinds of reasons. If I surrounded an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed to jump over the boundary; or it may show where the property of one man ends and that of another begins; and so on. So if one draws a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 499).

"When a sentence is called senseless, it is not as it were that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation." (Wittgenstein 1958:section 500)

The reliance of Wittgenstein's social epistemology upon intersubjective meanings comes into clearer view through a consideration of sections 499 and 500. In these sections Wittgenstein apparently proposes a subjective view of meaning with the claim that anyone can draw a boundary for any reason. Yet, despite this appearance, these sections actually point to the social process of making judgments to establish the limits of meaning.

In *Ethics Without Philosophy*, James Edwards interpreted these sections in a way that leads to both subjectivism and relativism. According to Edwards, they reveal Wittgenstein's view that the "canons of sense... vary at different times for different persons and for many reasons." "In this light," Edwards continues the "apparent objectivity" of judgments is "diminished" "since to make such a judgment is just to call attention to a boundary that someone, perhaps only oneself, has drawn in language for a particular purpose" (Edwards 1982:109-110). This way of reading

Wittgenstein implies that judgments concerning the limits of sense can be made arbitrarily by individuals for their own subjective purposes.

Edwards's interpretation distorts the meaning of these sections by ignoring their context within Wittgenstein's therapeutic methodology. In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein calls us "to travel over a wide field of thought which criss-cross in every direction" in order to heal those philosophical confusions which separate us from the shared world of linguistic activity (Wittgenstein 1958:ix). Edwards's rather literal interpretation of the illustration given by Wittgenstein of someone drawing a boundary is inconsistent with this methodology. An interpretation more consistent with this therapeutic strategy recognizes that this illustration serves as an "object of comparison," an "intermediate case" used to alter our ways of seeing (Wittgenstein 1958:section 130,122).

As an "object of comparison," this illustration leads us to consider it alongside other sections in the *Investigations* where Wittgenstein portrayed the dependence of human judgment upon the dynamic ways that communities use words and establish the boundaries of their meanings. In light of this more contextual model of judgment, the absurdity of *an individual* drawing boundaries for any particular purpose is displayed. Remembering that Wittgenstein ties meaning to use, it can be seen that a boundary designed to be jumped over functions as no boundary at all. Thus, this illustration is best viewed as another of Wittgenstein's therapeutic strategies designed "to show the fly the way out of the fly bottle" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 309).

This depiction of an individual who draws boundaries for a variety of purposes can be viewed in light of Wittgenstein's attack on the possibility of a private language. Just as its absurdity reveals that language itself requires the social tasks of learning through observation and imitation, so excluding words from the domain of language is a social, intersubjective judgment rather than a subjective decision. A boundary which exists as the property of an individual's discretion is detached from a social context and thus it is absurd in the same way that human beings speaking in monologue is absurd:

> A human being can encourage himself, give himself orders, obey, blame and punish himself; he can ask himself a question and answer it. We could even imagine human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves. An

explorer who watched them might succeed in translating their language into ours. (Wittgenstein 1958:section 243)

The monolinguist's self-communication can be understood by an explorer as long as it retains what G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker call the "possibility of agreement" (Baker and Hacker 1990:17-18). In the same way, an individual drawing a boundary line for various reasons can make sense as long as it retains the possibility that others will agree with its borders and in a sense make it a true limit with a common purpose of establishing the domains of a language. Both illustrations are absurd, yet their absurdity is limited in that both retain the potential to extend beyond the individual, in that both have linguistic resources which point to the possibility of mutual agreement.

David Pears has interpreted this illustration of the monolinguists not as being Wittgenstein's "object of interest" but rather as serving to mark that which follows as the object of his investigation (Pears 1988:337). The same could be said of the individual drawing boundaries of meaning. Rather than existing as Wittgenstein's object of interest, this example points to his primary interest in the communal establishment of the boundaries of meaning when "a combination of words is ... withdrawn from circulation." The establishment of these boundaries is not a subjective decision but a collective judgment--a kind of tacit agreement to allow certain words to slowly fall out of use and thus "lose" their meaning. In this way, Wittgenstein's remarks in section 500 point to boundaries that function as communal means to place limits upon sense through the shared process of coming to agree upon what will remain in use and what is to be "excluded from language." [6]

This therapeutic strategy designed to direct our attention toward the ways that meanings are established in our everyday use of words is not an arbitrary subjective decision as Edwards claimed but an intersubjective judgment that emerges "naturally" out of the matrix of action, thoughts, and purposes which comes into play as we communicate with others to establish what is outside the limits of sense. Even though this decision

[6] For this reason, Philip Shields assertion that for Wittgenstein a boundary "only takes on a particular sense as it holds a place within a given nexus of human activity" is in greater accord with the *Investigations* as a whole than the interpretation offered by James Edwards (Shields 1993:27).

located in social practices is groundless, it is not arbitrary because the whole tissue of our lives surrounds such shared, intersubjective judgments. Such basic common agreement establishes a limit on what makes sense, and it is this agreement about the boundaries of meaning that must be presupposed for there to be any other agreements in individual opinion.

In an essay found in the second collection of his *Philosophical Papers*, Charles Taylor describes intersubjective meanings in a way that is very close to my reading of Wittgenstein. Taylor distinguishes intersubjective meanings both from subjective meanings which are the property of individuals and from non-subjective meanings which occur when individual beliefs converge into a consensus. Unlike either of these, intersubjective meanings are rooted in social practice and are in no sense the property of an individual. Unlike these other meanings, they are "ideas and norms which are constitutive of the wider social matrix" (Taylor 1985:37-8). According to Taylor, a society which has a "strong web" of intersubjective meanings provides people with a "common language" making possible a "common reference world" which can subsist in the face of the "high degree of cleavage" that occurs as these common meanings are lived out in alternative ways by different groups in a society (Taylor 1985:39).

In affinity with Charles Taylor, a Wittgensteinian notion of intersubjective meanings goes beyond the narrow rationality of the Cartesian "cogito." Intersubjective meanings are neither abstracted from persons nor limited to the individual. Rather, they are hammered out in those informal negotiations that take place between persons in the dialogues of everyday life. With the assertion that "thinking is not an incorporeal process that is logically independent of speech," Wittgenstein provides a broader notion of rationality that can be described as a social epistemology (Wittgenstein 1958:section 340). As a vibrant undercurrent for this dynamic view of knowledge, intersubjective meanings can be described as those dialogical norms which are presupposed by a common language in order to establish the limits of the sensible which, in turn, provide what Taylor called the "common reference world" that makes agreement in epistemic judgment possible.

This dialogical character of intersubjective meaning stands in contrast to the fideist claim that religious belief is logically autonomous. It suggests that the possibility for agreement is inherent in the ordinary social practices which establish the domain of language. When Norman

Malcolm claims that "all rational operations occur within a system" he portrays a form of life in a narrow sense which has affinity with Wittgenstein's illustration of the monolinguists. By embedding rationality in those social practices that are turned inward to a self-sustained community, a view of existence is presented akin to Wittgenstein's mythical "human beings who spoke only in monologue; who accompanied their activities by talking to themselves."

An isolationist portrayal of logically autonomous communities standing side by side each with their own internal criteria of intelligibility pursues this monolinguistic attempt in the disguised form of epistemically self-sustained communities capable of defining meanings solely upon their own internal criteria of intelligibility. This pursuit for order is in sharp contrast to what Joseph Incandela has described as the "essentially dialogical" character of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In distinction from independent systems of rationality, Wittgenstein seeks to direct our attention "*to* the agent in his or her concrete circumstances and hence *away from* a picture of forms of life ... as logically enclosed atoms of discourse." According to Incandela, it is by directing us toward the dialogical character of persons, that Wittgenstein reveals the limitations of focusing "on systems of belief abstracted from the conditions of human life" (Incandela 1985:463).

In light of this broader notion of rationality which presupposes intersubjective meanings, epistemic isolationists can be seen to have envisioned a view of knowledge that is not completely removed from the solipsism of Cartesian epistemology. In their assertion that forms of life are logically autonomous, they compartmentalize language into tight epistemic nuclei. Thus, like Descartes, they have attempted to narrow rationality to a mythical realm removed from the "twisted and irregular" paths of human dialogue which make agreement possible in spite of the arbitrary borders of individual subjects and epistemically sequestered communities.

THE BREADTH OF MEANING

"Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, - but that they are *related*

to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this
relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all language."
(Wittgenstein 1958:section 65)

The dialogical norms of intersubjective meaning dislocate epistemic prac-
tices from their precise starting points found in either the solitary con-
sciousness of Cartesian epistemology or the autonomous communities of
fideism. In sections 65 through 67 Wittgenstein seeks to absolve us from
the craving to secure clearly defined methodological starting points.
Through this therapeutic strategy, it becomes clear that Wittgenstein's
later philosophy moves away from either of these epistemic pursuits of
order toward a recognition of the intersubjective character of meaning.

For the later Wittgenstein, language is located in the heart of the an-
cient city, in the myriad of exchanges which make up ordinary communi-
cation. By turning our attention to the interconnections of this nebulous
mass of dialogue, Wittgenstein sought to cure the philosophical confusion
behind another prominent philosophy of language, the word-object theory
of meaning. This theory, championed by Bertrand Russell, Rudolf
Carnap, and Wittgenstein, himself, in his early years of the *Tractatus* held
that words function like the names of things. So, a word or expression has
a certain precise meaning found in the essence of the thing to which it
refers (High 1967:29-31). Wittgenstein uncovers the illusory belief that
things called by a single name are joined by a common essence with the
recognition that the meanings of words relate to one another in a variety
of ways.

This recognition can bring us face to face with the intersubjective char-
acter of meaning. In pursuit of this goal, Wittgenstein takes us on "many
journeys through the city." By considering the diversity of relationships
found in games and family resemblances, he leads us along the same
winding street "a number of times" so that finally we are able to "find
[our] way about" through the maze of interconnectedness which makes
up our use of concepts. Wittgenstein directs us to the heart of the ancient
city by commanding us to look for (not think about) what is common
among all those things that we call "games." If we simply observe their
similarities, we see that there are "multifarious relations among them all"
and that "similarities 'crop up and disappear:'"

> And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of
> similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall simi-
> larities, sometimes similarities of detail. (Wittgenstein 1958:section
> 66)

With this observation of an irreducible variety of similarities, Wittgenstein
replaces the goal to discern a common linguistic essence with the
recognition that words and expressions are interrelated, having no
uniform relationship to the things they signify and thus no single, precise
meaning. They are related to one another through endless overlaps which
"crop up" at one place and "disappear" again without warning. This
recognition of the way that concepts interpenetrate with one another
cures the philosophical craving to attain linguistic precision by undermin-
ing the presupposition that there is something fixed and uniform under-
neath the confusing diversity of language. Setting aside an essential me-
dium connecting the subject to the world, Wittgenstein seeks to make us
content to do our epistemic work at the heart of the city amid the unpre-
dictable ways where meanings converge and dissipate.

After a consideration of games, Wittgenstein leads us down this same
street a second time with the illustration of "family resemblances." By
considering the variety of ways that members of a family share resem-
blances with one another, he directs our attention to the diversity of simi-
larities that can be found in the interrelated ways that words are used in
different contexts. According to Wittgenstein, the expressions we use in
ordinary language are similar to one another in the same way that families
share characteristics such as "build, facial features, color of eyes, gait,
and temperament" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 67). Members of a family
share many resemblances without every member sharing one essential
trait that is unique to their particular family. As Wittgenstein explains,
"some of them have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and others
again the same way of walking; and those likenesses overlap" (Suter
1989:27).

To complicate matters further, these shared characteristics are not
necessarily unique to just one family. Similar traits may be apparent in the
members of other families. In the same way, things that are all called by
one name do not always have one unique thing in common, and what they
do share is not always a characteristic peculiar to that group (Suter
1989:27). Therefore, the philosophical goal of linguistic precision is mis-

guided because the relationships between the meanings of words, which Wittgenstein locates in use, are complex. Not only is the group itself heterogeneous but the words which seem to share a common meaning have overlapping similarities with the words of other groups. Thus, it is impossible to reach any essential definition of a word or expression.

Through such entanglements, meanings are extended in the same way that "spinning a thread" involves twisting "fibre upon fibre." Attacking the pursuit of a common essence, Wittgenstein concludes that "the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 67). As concepts extend and their similarities overlap, there is the potential for their meanings to interpenetrate. That is to say that there is a metaphorical quality to our meanings. Each word or expression points beyond its meaning in one context to point toward a multiplicity of meanings. Thus, there is an indefinite quality to meaning, a suggestiveness of something more that is typically only associated with poetic language. In this way, Wittgenstein replaces the precise hidden meaning of the word-object theory with many half-hidden meanings located in the potential of words and expressions to be continually reformed for use in other contexts. This portrayal could be described as a scaffolding of meaning which extends through the variety of ways that words and expressions are used in the ancient city of our common linguistic arena.

This part of Wittgenstein's depiction of the intersubjecive character of meaning has affinity with Frederick Waismann's notion that empirical concepts have an "open texture" which allows them to be applicable to continually new contexts without foreseeing all possible conditions in which they will be used. As Waismann puts it, words are "non-exhaustive:"

> there will always remain a possibility, however faint, that we have not taken into account something or other that might be relevant to their usage; and that means we cannot foresee completely all the possible circumstances in which the statement is true or false. There will always remain a margin of uncertainty. (Waismann 1960:121)

Waismann's reflections on the "open-texture" of words implies that meanings are open to revision. Contrary to an isolationist reading of

Wittgenstein, this implication is consistent with the sections of the *Investigations* which point to intersubjective meaning. Since meaning is intersubjective, epistemic judgments must be seen as thoroughly contextual in their reliance upon the horizon of potentiality which accompanies each word or expression in different contexts that continually provide it with new meanings while allowing older meanings to drop away.

The way that changes in meaning occur can be seen by considering Wittgenstein's metaphor of a "river-bed of thought." In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein says that "some empirical propositions" are like a river. Others are like the "river-bed," and still others are like the banks of the river. The image of the river points to those "empirical propositions" which are not "hardened but fluid." Their relationship to hardened propositions may "be altered with time" so that "fluid propositions harden, and hard ones become fluid." Since there is not a "sharp division" between the "movement of the waters on the river-bed and the river-bed itself, it may shift to revise the meaning of our experiences (Wittgenstein 1969:sections 96-7).

For Wittgenstein, the logical principles which guide reason are cultural products of trial and error. It is important to remember that Wittgenstein notes that while it is possible to "distinguish" between the movement of the river and the river-bed they cannot be separated from one another. Thus, underneath the confusing diversity of ordinary language is not an essential fixed meaning founded in the objects of the world but a fluidity of meanings like water flowing through a river bed. While Wittgenstein draws no further conclusions, one could suppose that boundaries can be moved in order "to revise what counts as the domain of the imaginable" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 517). If our intersubjective mediation of experience allows boundaries to be altered, it is conceivable that a form of life can gradually begin to take new shape. As hardened propositions become fluid, the "river-bed of thought" shifts and a form of life evolves that could be called "new."

Yet, these cultural shifts in meaning are not arbitrary. They are not tied to the subjective decisions of an individual but are located in our intersubjective meanings. In a foundationalist sense, these meanings are uncertain because they remain open to the possibility of revision, but in Wittgenstein's nonfoundationalist philosophy they are more aptly described as the groundless certainty of convention. This groundless certainty which comprises the shared perspective of a form of life entails that some central meanings have a certain stability through time which is

measured through gradual shifts rather than the radical jumps in reasoning that are often associated with the switching of paradigms.

Through these observations, Wittgenstein contextualizes epistemology. It is impossible to say what a word means in any definitive way. When used in different contexts the same word may have different meanings because it is used in different ways. By considering those familiar linguistic anomalies which allow words like "cleave" to mean "to tear asunder" in one context and "to adhere to" in another, Wittgenstein takes us back to the heart of the city. He reminds us that in every day communication the meaning of words are not precise and there is no uniformity beneath the diversity of human ways of speaking.

In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein rejected all philosophical pursuits to get beneath the surface of everyday to achieve a foundational ideal as an unintelligible pursuit. We are not to plumb ordinary language until we reach the essentially precise notation which lies "beneath its surface," but we are "to go back to the rough ground" to the surface of this lived reality with all its vagueness and ambiguity (Wittgenstein 1958:sections 92 and 107). He is taking us into the thicket of ordinary language where the goal of absolute clarity is relinquished, and the quest of attaining a fundamental essence is abandoned.

By avoiding the desire to seek a unifying essence that holds together things of a kind, we can recognize that words are meaningful and we can understand their meaning even if we cannot provide their necessary and sufficient conditions (Suter 1989:35). Rather than assuming that meaning resides in some hidden essence either in the mind or in the words themselves, Wittgenstein portrays meaning as a kind of web with no recognizable center. The pursuit of uniformity is replaced with a recognition of diversity and the goal of precision is superseded by the acknowledgment that "only in the stream of thought and life do words have their meaning" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 43). In this way, Wittgenstein takes the locus of meaning out of individual consciousness and relocates it in the prosaic transactions that govern our shared linguistic world.

This redirection of modern epistemology can also be seen as a movement away from all epistemic isolationism, in the light of Wittgenstein's claim that the borders of a language game are not fixed and clear like the borders separating two countries, but much more vague and less likely to be consistently recognized. In his words, a language-game is "not a closed frontier. For how is the concept of game bounded? What still counts

as a game and no longer does? Can you give the boundary? No?" (Wittgenstein 1958:section 98). Since there is no defining characteristic that things must have in order to be called "games," "one might say that the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges" (Wittgenstein 1958: section 71). This depiction of language games reveals why Wittgenstein's later philosophy does not move toward epistemic isolationism. Meanings are not embedded in structures standing vertically in a single spot like the tower of Babel. By attempting to preserve a definitive place to stand over against other linguistic communities, isolationist interpretations fail to recognize the dynamic character of linguistic meaning. Expressing an odd symptom of "Cartesian anxiety," they all present a static portrayal of language which elicits a kind of dualism between being inside the boundaries of a language game or outside its borders failing to take into account Wittgenstein's own depictions of these borders as "blurred."

These depictions of forms of life as fixed entities with clearly defined borders characterizes the contemporary interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. For example, Kai Nielson portrayed Wittgenstein's position as one in which logic is "*embedded* in the modes of social life" (Nielson 1967:192). Along the same lines, Kathleen Emmett describes the "*intransigence*, the stubbornness, the grammatical *entrenchedness*" of forms of life (Emmett 1990:229). David Pears referred to "*areas* of discourse which prohibit all attempts to place "one foot on each side of the boundary."(Pears 1988:342) According to William Alston, each language game is ontologically *filled* with a specific type of entity and conceptually it is a "*closed circle*." Finally Philip Shields refers to a "*structure*" existing "within the boundaries ... marked by logic or grammar" (Shields 1993:58) (emphasis added).

In these examples, Wittgenstein's reflections on forms of life are interpreted with static portrayals of territorial images in which different modes of discourse are viewed as clearly defined areas separated from one another like the borders of a country. This pursuit of clearly defined linguistic boroughs allows Wittgenstein's dynamic portrayal of linguistic forms of life to be mistakenly depicted in foundationalist terms as entities which provide a solid grounding to embed logic or as containers which hold isolated language games like a vessel. As a result, they mistakenly present Wittgenstein's view of language as "a mosaic of tight linguistic

nuclei."[7] And, subsequently, they fail to recognize those sections in the *Investigations* which depict language more like amoebas viewed under a microscope who collide, interpenetrate, and slide over top of one another. When such sections are read in light of Wittgenstein's therapeutic intentions to dissolve the artificial distinctions between outer and inner, such expressions of epistemic isolationism are exposed as mere inversions of the modern attempt to escape the complexities and ambiguities of our shared linguistic world.

My alternative reading which moves in the opposite direction toward a recognition of the intersubjective character of meaning can be brought into sharper focus by considering Wittgenstein's later philosophy alongside W. V. O. Quine's holistic epistemology. Quine asserts that knowledge has no recognizable starting point. He described human understanding as a web of knowledge by presenting an epistemic model of a "man-made fabric which impinges on experience only at the edges." Conflicts with experience occur "at the periphery" and do not necessarily lead to "adjustments in the interior of the field" (Quine 1963:41). Yet, revision is not necessary because our propositions have a "thick cushion of indeterminacy, in relation to experience ... We can always turn to other quarters of the system when revisions are called for" (Quine 1952:xiii). Thus, beliefs at the center of the web are less likely to be revised because they are interconnected with more shared elements in the rest of the system. When experience necessitates a change in the system, the decision is based upon how best to restore consistency with the least disturbance to the system as a whole (Murphy 1990:7-8).

As with Quine's web of knowledge, Wittgensteinian intersubjectivity acknowledges no recognizable starting point. Since the meanings of concepts cross-pollinate between different language games and boundaries shift to continually create "new" forms of life, starting-points cannot be viewed as clearly defined locations that endure through time. Rather, there is a dialogical character to human understanding which encompasses conversation partners that extend beyond our awareness. Different discourses share "half-hidden" points of commonality formed and reformed out of tacitly shared logical criteria and the unrecognized intertwining of conceptual meanings.

---

[7] John Downey noted the mistaken interpretation that Wittgenstein views language as "a mosaic of tight linguistic nuclei" (Downey 1986:138-9).

Following this recognition, religion is understood not as a clearly defined language game distinct from all other modes of discourse but rather as part of a shared interrelated web acknowledging a mutual dependency that disallows isolationist claims to logical autonomy or conceptual self-sufficiency. Yet in the midst of this ambiguity, religious identity is preserved because those beliefs which are held to be central to the faith, those intersubjective assumptions that Wittgenstein compared to a river-bed and Quine placed at the center of the web of knowledge, persist as core beliefs providing norms to guide theological judgments. In this way, Wittgensteinian intersubjectivity avoids relativism by recognizing not only the fluidity of human ways of knowing but also the permanence of those beliefs and practices which preserve religious identity.

Returning with Wittgenstein to the heart of the ancient city does not leave us with a philosophical method to appropriate into our theological reflection. Rather theologians are offered the recognition that theological discourse resides in the complex patterns of those intersubjective meanings which persist without recognizable starting points either in the realm of consciousness or in a fictitious homogeneous Christian language-game. Thus, acknowledging the intersubjective character of meaning does not so much initiate conversation between theology and other modes of discourse as it recognizes that on a basic level the conversation has already begun - a recognition that follows Wittgenstein's guidance back to the heart of the ancient city where we can accept his challenge to "begin at the beginning" without trying "to go further back" (Wittgenstein 1969: section 471).

REFERENCES

Baker, G.P. and P.M.S. Hacker.
    1985   *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar and Necessity*. An Analytical
                Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations. Vol.2,
                Oxford: Blackwell

1990   *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind.* An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations. Vol.3, Oxford: Blackwell

Downey, John.
1986   *Beginning at the Beginning: Wittgenstein and Theological Conversation.* Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America

Edwards, James C.
1986   *Ethics Without Philosophy: Wittgenstein and the Moral Life.* Tampa: University Presses of Florida

Emmet, Kathleen
1990   "Forms of Life." *Philosophical Investigations.* vol. 13 no.3 p. 229

Frankenberry, Nancy
1988   *Religion and Radical Empiricism.* Albany: State University of New York Press

High, Dallas M.
1967   *Language, Persons, and Belief: Studies in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations and Religious Uses of Language.* New York: Oxford University Press

Incandela, Joseph M.
1985   "The Appropriation of Wittgenstein's Work by Philosophers of Religion: Towards a Re-evaluation and an End." *Religious Studies.* Vol.21, no.4 (December 1985) pp.457-474.

Malcolm, Norman
1992   "The Groundlessness of Belief." in *Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology.* Eds. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.92-104..

Monk, Ray
1990   *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius.* New York: The Free Press

Murphy, Nancey
1990   *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Nielson, Kai
    1967   "Wittgensteinian Fideism." *Philosophy*. Vol.42, no.161
                (July 1967) pp.191-207.
    1992   "Does Religious Skepticism Rest on a Mistake?" in
                Contemporary Perspectives on Religious Epistemology.
                Eds. R. Douglas Geivett and Brendan Sweetman. New
                York: Oxford University Press. p.116-128.

Pears, David
    1988   *The False Prison: A Study in the Development of
                Wittgenstein's Philosophy*. Vol.2, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Phillips, D.Z.
    1981   "Belief, Change, and Forms of Life: The Confusions of
                Externalism and Internalism." in *The Autonomy of Reli-
                gious Belief: A Critical Inquiry*. Ed. Frederick J. Crossan.
                Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press
    1988   *Faith After Foundationalism*. London: Routledge

Quine, Williard Van Orman
    1952   *Methods of Logic*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul
    1963   *From a Logical Point of View*. 2nd. rev. ed. New York:
                Harper and Row

Shields, Philip R.
    1993   *Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein*.
                Chicago: Univeristy of Chicago Press

Surin, Kenneth
    1988   "'Many Religions and One True Faith': An Examination of
                Lindbeck's Chapter Three." *Modern Theology* Vol.4, no.2
                (January 1988) pp.187-224.

Suter, Ronald
    1989   *Interpreting Wittgenstein: A Cloud of Philosophy, a Drop of
                Grammar*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press

Taylor, Charles
    1985   "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man." in *Philosophy
                and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers, 2*. Cam-
                bridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.32-48.
    1995   "Overcoming Epistemology." in *Philosophical Arguments*.
                Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Tracy, David
    1985   "Lindbeck's New Program for Theology: A Reflection." *The Thomist*. Vol.49, no.3 (July 1985) pp.460-472.

Trigg, Roger
    1973   *Reason and Commitment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Waismann, Frank
    1960   "Verifiability." in *Logic and Language*. 1st series, Ed. Antony Flew. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.117-145.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig
    1958   *Philosophical Investigations*. 3rd. edition. trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, New York: Macmillan
    1967   *Zettel*. Eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Berkeley: University of California Press
    1969   *On Certainty*. Eds. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, New York: Harper Torchbooks

Hans-Georg Gadamer's Ontological Hermeneutics and Karl Barth's Biblical Hermeneutics

D. PAUL LA MONTAGNE

INTRODUCTION

HANS-GEORG GADAMER IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTORS TO hermeneutics in this century. He finds his starting point in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, but develops his hermeneutics from that starting point in an original and insightful way. He places his emphasis upon hermeneutics as ontology, that is, as an investigation into the nature and character of being. This is a distinctive and original move, but one that is not without its critics.

Karl Barth is not, by design, a contributor to the field of general hermeneutics. He does, however, spend a great deal of time and effort upon the special task of biblical hermeneutics. He begins his work in biblical hermeneutics not from considerations out of general hermeneutics, but rather from a consideration of the doctrine of revelation. This is a reflex of his doctrine of God, for if God is God, and not merely the idealization of the possibilities inherent in our human activities, then general

considerations cannot be permitted to prejudice in advance who and what God might reveal God's self to be.

But if Barth's biblical hermeneutics does not begin from general hermeneutics, it does interact with general hermeneutics. First and foremost it stands as a critique of general hermeneutics as it stood in the 1930s and previously. Secondly, and more basically, Barth considers that biblical hermeneutics should serve as a source and instructor for general hermeneutics.

This paper conducts itself in three movements. In the first, the basic ontological character of Gadamer's hermeneutics is explicated and evaluated. In the second, the compatibility between Barth's biblical hermeneutics and Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics is noted and explained. In the third, some areas where general hermeneutics in Gadamer's ontological form may yet learn from biblical hermeneutics are examined. The object is to demonstrate the viability of Barth as a conversation partner in current hermeneutical discussions.

HANS-GEORG GADAMER'S ONTOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

Gadamer's own statement is

> Philosophical hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutic dimension in its full scope, showing its fundamental significance for our entire understanding of the world and thus for all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself: from interhuman communication to manipulation of society; from personal experience of the individual in society to the way in which he encounters society; from the tradition as it is built of religion and law, art and philosophy, to the revolutionary consciousness that unhinges the tradition through emancipatory reflection (1976:18).

This task of opening up the hermeneutic dimension and showing its fundamental significance is, for Gadamer, primarily an ontological task. To discuss hermeneutics, is to discuss what kind of being we have such that we understand and what kind of being the world has such that it is understood. This task has, of course, epistemological consequences, and Gadamer spends more than a little time on them. Of particular importance for him, both defensively and offensively, is explaining the methodologi-

cal and epistemological success of the natural sciences in terms of his ontological understanding of hermeneutics. He does this by characterizing the epistemological methodology of the natural sciences, and those forms of the human sciences that seek to emulate them, as a specialized, limited scope, method specific form of the general act of human understanding (Gadamer 1989).[1]

Gadamer makes his ontological, rather than epistemological and methodological, intentions clear from the original introduction to *Truth and Method*.[2] He is following up on the work of Heidegger when he approaches hermeneutics in an ontological way. He is seeking the conditions of being that precede and make possible "any action of understanding on the part of subjectivity, including the methodical activity of the 'interpretive sciences' and their norms and rules (1989:xxx)."

> Heidegger's temporal analytics of *Dasein* has, I think, shown convincingly that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviors of the subject, but the mode of being of *Dasein* itself. It is in this sense that the term "hermeneutics" has been used here. It denotes the basic being-in-motion of *Dasein* that constitutes its finitude and historicity, and embraces the whole of its experience of the world (Gadamer 1989:xxx).

What Gadamer contributes in the furtherance of the project that Heidegger started is a detailed and convincing analysis of the being-in-motion which is the mode of being of *Dasein*, with special attention to its finitude and historicity. For Gadamer this motion is the "play" in which we are caught up in the act of understanding. This back and forth play in interpretation or conversation is not so much something we do as some-

---

[1] That scientific method is a reduced or limited form of understanding, see 1989:239; that it has its roots in and takes its success from understanding in the broader sense Gadamer is explicating, and therefore cannot impose limits upon understanding, see 1989:283-4, 333-4; for a positive understanding of the relationship between scientific method and understanding within which it operates as a special purpose form of understanding, see 1989:451-6.

[2] 1989:xxiii, "The hermeneutics developed here is not, therefore, a methodology of the human sciences, but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of the world."

thing that does us (1989:101-110). The motion, the play, has several movements. There is the priority of the question in all knowledge and discourse (1989:363), a movement in which we address the subject matter, but also, in the circle which Gadamer describes, a movement in which the subject matter addresses us. But the question which we address to the subject matter, with its presuppositions about what kind of an answer amounts to an answer, is given in advance by our fore-understanding of the subject matter.[3] What is critical for Gadamer is that the motion has a back as well as a forth in the address of the subject matter with the fore-understandings, the prejudices, we bring to bear upon it. For the subject matter also calls our prejudices into question. Interpreting a text turns out to be a constant process of revising our prejudices in terms of what emerges into understanding as we interpret the text (1989:266-7). This revision is possible because in our encounter with a text the temporal distance between us and the text serves the purpose of critique, enabling us to foreground our prejudices, rather than leave them unconscious (1989:288-9). Moreover, our prejudices, the anticipations of meaning that constitute our fore-understandings, are not rootless, but are a product of the tradition in which we stand and from which we come to the text.

> The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence, further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a "methodological" circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding (1989:293).

Here we have the key to why this is an ontological hermeneutics. Because we produce ourselves inasmuch as we "understand, participate in the evolution of the tradition" and "further determine it ourselves," hermeneutics is about the kind of being that we have. In this way of looking at herme-

---

[3] The necessity of fore-understanding and the impossibility of a presuppositionless address of the subject matter is widely admitted even by such critics of Gadamer's hermeneutics as Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1985:295-6).

neutics we are constituted as understanding beings by the prejudices and traditions in which we participate.

Gadamer's hermeneutics is ontological in a circle, not just in one direction. It is not just ontological as a description of our being as understanding beings characterized by the traditions and prejudices in which we participate. It is also ontological in the direction of that which we understand out of our traditions. The things themselves, the texts in the most characteristic cases, have an effect upon us. They enable us to foreground our prejudices, and to judge critically between true and false prejudices. Most important for Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics is that the texts have an effect upon us. That effect has an ongoing history which is part of the tradition out of which we come to a text. This is the importance of the concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* in Gadamer: that in our consciousness of the history of the effect of a text we are ourselves shaped by the text, even before we come to it. The very questions we ask a text are, through the mediation of historically effected consciousness, partly a product of the text.[4]

This ontological connection to the things themselves in the act of interpretation goes in both directions, back to the things themselves through our consciousness of the history of the effects of the things themselves upon the tradition from which we derive our prejudices, and also forwards, towards the things themselves, as we subject our fore-understandings to revision in the light of the things themselves. Gadamer first cites Heidegger from *Being and Time* as to scientific necessity of working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves (1989:266, citing from Heidegger 1962:153). Then he addresses the question as to how interpreters let themselves be guided by the things themselves. His answer to this question is also his answer to the question of what constitutes objectivity.

> A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard

[4] Gadamer 1989:301: "Rather, historically effected consciousness is an element in the act of understanding itself and, as we shall see, is already effectual in finding the right questions to ask."

to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there....

This constant process of new projection constitutes the movement of understanding and interpretation. A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings that are not borne out by the things themselves. Working out appropriate projections, anticipatory in nature, to be confirmed "by the things" themselves, is the constant task of understanding. The only "objectivity" here is the confirmation of a fore-meaning in its being worked out (1989:267).

The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the text is what makes it possible for the interpreter to have foremeanings that are appropriate and will be confirmed by the things themselves. Thus the hermeneutic circle is completed in its ontological sense. In this way Gadamer's hermeneutics is not just an ontology of the kind of beings we are as beings that understand, but also of the kind of being that can be understood.[5] "Being that can be understood is language." The epistemological consequence of this ontological way of looking at hermeneutics is the fusion of horizons which is the basic accomplishment in any act of interpretation (1989:306-7). Thus, for Gadamer, the epistemological character of hermeneutics is dependent upon and a consequence of its basic ontological character.[6]

In making an ontological approach to hermeneutics, with a working out of epistemological consequences, but still basically ontological, I

[5] Gadamer 1989:474: "We can now see that this activity of the thing itself, the coming into language of meaning, points to a universal ontological structure, namely to the basic nature of everything toward which understanding can be directed. Being that can be understood is language. The hermeneutical phenomenon here projects its own universality back onto the ontological constitution of what is understood, determining it in a universal sense as language and determining its own relation to beings as interpretation."

[6] This is the basic issue between Gadamer and Habermas, one of his major critics. For Habermas, hermeneutics is basically epistemological (Mendelson 1979:57) and philosophical hermeneutics must take its beginning from an analysis of the nature of language and the act of communication (Habermas 1985:294). This analysis constitutes a critique of hermeneutics that, for Habermas, is the function of philosophical hermeneutics. This critique is primarily a reflection upon the limits of hermeneutics, very much in the spirit of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (Habermas 1985:302). Habermas's early work is marked by a founda-

think we must understand Gadamer as being fundamentally correct. That which we know, which we know in our interpretation of it, "widens our horizon ... by overturning an existing perspective" (Gadamer 1989:xiii). In the encounter with the known, in which our horizon is widened, we formulate an insight, that is, a new place to stand from which to formulate a perspective upon the widened horizon within which we now dwell. The place to stand referred to here is a conceptual place to stand. That is to say that although we refer to it metaphorically as a place, it is actually a process. It is specifically the process by which we program a new set of mental procedures within our minds. These new procedures are the dynamic perspectives upon the new horizon which we then practice. That is to say, these procedures are processes for generating thoughts and feelings about objects which fall within our (new) horizon, which thoughts are relative to both the horizon and our insight. This means that when we know anything the *act* of knowledge, in as much as it is a response to an encounter with an other, is specifically and necessarily an act of changing our minds. This means that in every act of knowledge who we are changes; when we don't change we don't really know. Thus, every act of knowledge is an act of love in which we allow who we are to be changed by that which we love in our knowledge of it. Therefore an epistemological ap-

---

tional interest, a transcendental character, and a search for an objective framework. These are marks of an epistemological orientation. But "[i]n *The Theory of Communicative Action* Habermas defines a position that, although retaining some elements of his earlier foundational tendencies, nevertheless appears to moving closer to an anti-foundational stance (Hekman 1986:132-3)." An anti-foundational or non-foundational stance is one which is much more likely to transcend the artificial division between epistemology and ontology. It seems clear though that Habermas's approach has, at least, its roots in an epistemological approach to hermeneutics. Communicative competence is what Habermas intends to theorize in a normative fashion so that it can serve as a critical corrective to the limits of naive hermeneutics in a self-reflectively aware philosophical hermeneutics. But to do so is to make hermeneutics an element in a theory of how we know and communicate, that is, to approach it epistemologically. Finally, social interaction is a realm of action and experience that Habermas considers contains more than is thematized in hermeneutic understanding (Mendelson 1979:64-5; Hekman 1985:131). If this is the case then hermeneutics claim to universality, a claim that is closely connected with Gadamer's ontological approach to hermeneutics, must fail.

proach to hermeneutics brings us up against the necessity of acknowl-
edging the ontological dimension of hermeneutics, that it is about who
we are as knowers and understanders, and what the world and texts are
that they can be known and understood.

I consider that epistemology and ontology are mutually interdependent
in the following way. Our knowing depends upon who we are and what
kind of being we have. In this way epistemic *actuality* is dependent upon
ontic *actuality*. But our knowledge of being, both our own and that of
"things," is dependent upon the way in which we know. In this way *ontol-
ogy* is dependent upon *epistemology*. But the epistemology upon which
ontology depends must be an ontologically aware epistemology, one that
knows that knowing is founded upon being. Gadamer's ontological
hermeneutics is this kind of epistemology. It may not be the only one pos-
sible. It may need correction and modification at points. But it is, at least,
the right kind of thing. It combines ontology and epistemology in a non-
vicious circle.

There remains a question as to whether hermeneutics is *universal* on-
tology. This is a point at which Gadamer is strongly criticized by Jürgen
Habermas. A brief consideration at this point of the reasons for
Habermas's rejection of the claims of hermeneutics to be a universal on-
tology will help us later to recognize how Barth's biblical hermeneutics
might be related to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics.

Habermas definitely rejects hermeneutics' claim to universality by as-
serting that there is something more to be grasped than is grasped in
hermeneutic understanding, especially hermeneutic understanding under-
stood as confined to language. Habermas considers the hypothetical-de-
ductive systems of the sciences not to be part of the elements of speech
and to grasp realities not articulated in natural language (Habermas
1985:300). He will only admit that hermeneutics is required for the trans-
lation of such knowledge into natural speech. Moreover, he considers that
"the genetic epistemology of Jean Piaget lays bare the language indepen-
dent roots of operational thinking." He admits that hermeneutics is re-
quired to integrate these roots into natural speech, but he considers that
"there are ample indications that language is merely 'superimposed'
upon categories such as space, time, causality, and substance, and on
rules that govern the combination of symbols according to the laws of for-
mal logic both of which have a pre-linguistic foundation."[7] But in saying
these things Habermas is not taking fully into account what he shows that

he knows about the work that has been done in mathematics on the relationship between formal and informal languages, and on the possibilities of meta-languages (Habermas 1985:295). Alfred Tarski's work on truth and language in the field of mathematical logic during the 1930s and 40s established that all formal languages were founded in informal languages, that truth in a formal language is always indefinable within that language, and that the informal notion of truth is always broader and deeper than any given formal definition of truth.[8]

For Habermas

> Language and behavior interpret each other reciprocally: indeed, that idea is already present in Wittgenstein's conception of the language game, in which the game is also a way of life. The grammar of language games, understood as a complete life *praxis*, governs not only the combination of symbols but the interpretation of linguistic symbols through actions and expressions. (Habermas 1985:297)

This sounds at first like something that Gadamer might be able to say, but the reference to "the grammar of language games" which govern "the interpretation of linguistic symbols through actions and expressions" actually reflects Habermas conviction that there is something more than the conversation that we are which must be grasped through a critical theory in order to supplement hermeneutics in the interpretation of linguistic symbols. The something more that Habermas understands to be there is seen in his other analyses to be not only the pre-linguistic realities upon which language is superimposed, but also the social realities of work and domination. For Gadamer the claim that hermeneutics must be supplemented with such an analysis is meaningless because such an analysis is itself an act of hermenutical understanding (Cf. Hekman 1986:120).

---

[7] Habermas 1985:300. Note how very Kantian Habermas sounds in speaking about space, time, causality, substance, and rules that govern the combination of symbols according to the laws of formal logic.

[8] See especially Tarski's paper on the indefineability of truth in formal languages and his work specifying what it means to be a formal language in mathematics. These papers can be found in Tarski 1976. I have not read the original papers, but rather, textbook digested versions of them in the intermediate and advanced mathematical logic courses that I took at Princeton University.

Gadamer has trouble with Habermas's critique because it refers to non-linguistic aspects of human life. Certainly there are non-linguistic aspects to human life, but there are no non-linguistic aspects to human understanding. What we have learned in neuro-physiology seen in the light of the design and programming of computer circuits reveals that even the underlying patterns of neural firings that lie beneath the level of anything that we are capable of being conscious of as thought constitute a language of their own sort. The possibility of appropriating and using for critical purposes the non-linguistic aspects of human life is a possibility only in the realm of human understanding, which is to say that it is a hermeneutical possibility. Gadamer's recognition of this fact from out of his study of the history of aesthetics and hermeneutics is why he considers hermeneutics to be a universal ontology. The question that we must ask ourselves as we move towards an examination of the hermeneutics of Karl Barth is whether this universality is to be taken in a soft or a hard sense. To take it in a hard sense would be to say that being that is understood is language, *and there is nothing else*. This would be perfectly compatible with Richard Rorty's assertion that there are no such things as persons. What we commonly call persons are merely the neuro-physiological *loci* within which take place these conversations between traditions and texts which we are. To take it in a soft sense is simply to recognize that whatever being may be, when being comes to understanding it does so as language, in an act of interpretation, as described by hermeneutics. Whether this is all there is, whether understanding is a personal act, is an open question.

It must be noted at this point that Habermas's assertion of something beyond the conversation that we are is dependent upon his affirmation of the possibility of methodic understanding in the sciences that does not depend upon hermeneutic understanding (Hekman 1986:132).

> His [Habermas's] task, as he states it at the outset, is to define criteria of rational action. He specifies that these criteria must include a relation that is of the "objective world" (that is, a relation to the facts) and is open to objective judgment. He is seeking, in other words, to define reason in terms of a universal core that structures our ability to communicate (Hekman 1986:133).

It is this notion of a universal reason that can be referred to to mediate all claims to knowledge of what is that makes Habermas's position so hard to swallow. This notion of a universal reason underlies Habermas's demand that hermeneutics be supplemented by a critical theory which precedes it logically in order to have any hope of being objective. Gadamer's universality is non-foundational in character, allowing what is to emerge in the ongoing act of interpretation, rather than specifying criteria for judging of the matter ahead of time. Gadamer's position recognizes the existence of criteria, standards, and prejudices derived from the tradition, but it regards these as also revisable in the light of what emerges from the ongoing act of interpretation. Objectivity does not lie in the methods of reason, but in the things themselves as they emerge into language in an ongoing act of interpretation. This kind of a standard of objectivity should be called *Sachlichkeit* to distinguish it from the kind of objectivity that positivists consider the hard sciences to have.

KARL BARTH'S BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC

The first thing to be dealt with here is the possibility of constructing a consonance between Barth's biblical hermeneutics and that of Gadamer. This construction is possible because several aspects of Barth's hermeneutic bear a strong formal resemblance to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics. But this consonance is nonetheless a construction. In doing biblical hermeneutics Barth makes assumptions some of which are compatible with Gadamer's hermeneutics and some of which are not. It will be very important to take careful note of those which are not.

Now Barth understands full well that he is not doing general hermeneutics. But he also does not consider that in doing Biblical hermeneutics he is thereby doing special hermeneutics. His basic statement of his doctrine of Holy Scripture, that the Bible is the witness of divine revelation, is precisely his grounds for treating the words of the Bible as human words (Barth 1956:462-3). It is for this reason that

> There is no point in ignoring the writtenness of Holy Writ for the sake of its holiness, its humanity for the sake of its divinity. We must not ignore it any more than we do the humanity of Jesus Christ himself. We must study it, for it is here or nowhere that we shall find its divinity. The Bible is a witness of revelation which is really given

and really applies and is really received by us just because it is a written word, and in fact a word written by men [people] just like ourselves which we can read and hear and understand as such. And it is as such that we must read and hear and understand it if this is to happen at all and there is to be any apprehension of revelation. (Barth 1956:463-4)

This means that the apprehension of revelation is a hermeneutic act of interpretation. The grounds for the hermeneutic nature of the apprehension of revelation lie in a material decision that Barth has made about the nature of revelation, and behind that, about the nature of the trinity. Barth advances the doctrine that the one revelation of God takes place in three forms, Jesus Christ, the word revealed, Holy Scripture, the word written, and the preaching and hearing of the Church, the word proclaimed (Barth 1975:88-124). The threefold form of the word of God is directly related to the doctrine of the trinity. To be most precise, the Trinity *itself,* is the ontic ground of the threefold form of the word of God. For this very reason the threefold form of the word of God is the epistemological ground for the *doctrine* of the trinity (Barth 1975:121). Thus, the grounds for the hermeneutic character of the apprehension of revelation do not lie in any general theory of hermeneutics, nor in any general theory of the nature of human understanding, but, rather, in the doctrine of God and of revelation. Indeed, for Barth, biblical hermeneutics must guard itself against the claims of general hermeneutics because "hermeneutics generally has been mortally sick for so long (Barth 1956:472)."

And yet, precisely because Barth's hermeneutic is a reflex of his doctrine of God and of revelation, and more than that, an attempt to respond in faithful witness to revelation itself, Barth exhibits in his hermeneutic the relation between ontic actuality and epistemic actuality, as well as between epistemology and ontology that I noted and approved of above in Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics. The difference, that for Barth hermeneutics is dependent upon God in the act of self-revelation, while for Gadamer it is dependent upon being itself, must not be neglected. But the formal similarity is strong at this point and arises from the commitment of both men to a hermeneutics in which the reality that gives rise to hermeneutics takes priority over the methods of hermeneutics.

In his material decision about the grounds of Biblical hermeneutics Barth places himself at a distance from Gadamer's hermeneutics, which

seek to ground themselves out of a general investigation into the nature of human understanding in its finitude and historicity, and which have in mind a (probably?) different reality which gives rise to hermeneutics. But it must be understood that it is not Gadamer that Barth has in mind here. It was during the early 1930s that the passages about biblical hermeneutics that I am examining here were published. The critical decisions were made in the early 20s (Barth 1933:2-14). Gadamer's work was not published until 1960. What Barth has in mind, against which he stands in specifying that biblical hermeneutics cannot grant any priority to general hermeneutics, is Dilthey's project of explicating hermeneutics as a general method for the human sciences. Because both Barth and Gadamer stand against Dilthey's project, because they both reject the notion that some one method can be trusted to lead to the truth either in the human sciences (Gadamer) or in biblical exegesis and theology (Barth), it is not surprising that we find this structural similarity between them.

Consider what Barth has to say about the source of his hermeneutics.

At this point the question arises: What is the source of the hermeneutic teaching which we have just sketched? ... It does not arise out of any general considerations on the nature of human language, etc., and therefore out of a general anthropology. ... It is in view of the only possible explanation of Holy Scripture that we have laid the principles of exposition indicated—not, of course, believing that they apply only to biblical exposition, but believing always that because they are valid for biblical exposition they are valid for the exposition of every human word, and can therefore lay claim to universal recognition. It is not at all that the word of man in the Bible has an abnormal significance and function. We see from the Bible what its normal significance and function is. It is from the word of man in the Bible that we must learn what has to be learned concerning the word of man in general. This is not generally recognized. It is more usual blindly to apply to the Bible false ideas taken from some other source concerning the significance and function of the human word. But this must not confuse us into thinking that the opposite way is the right one. There is no such thing as a special Biblical hermeneutics. But we have to learn that hermeneutics which is alone and generally valid by means of the Bible as the witness of revelation. (Barth 1956:465-6)

One of the first things to be noticed as a point of contact between this passage and Gadamer is that when Gadamer reviews the development of the concept of language he gives credit to the Christian idea of incarnation for preserving an idea, not Greek, that did some justice to the being of language (Gadamer 1989:418). He immediately connects this with the systematic elaboration of the doctrine of the trinity, although for a different reason than Barth (Gadamer 1989:419-22). Gadamer examines the doctrine of the trinity as it relates to the phenomenon of language in the work of Augustine and Aquinas, because it was in this work that the effect of the idea of incarnation on the concept of language was preserved in western thought. But his final conclusion on the matter is surprisingly like Barth's, that the idea that language must be understood as an appropriate medium for receiving the revelation of God turns out to be of critical importance for understanding the hermeneutical task.[9]

> *When the Greek idea of logic is penetrated by Christian theology something new is born: the medium of language, in which the mediation of the incarnation event achieves its full truth.* Christology prepares the way for a new philosophy of man, which mediates in a new way between the mind of man in its finitude and the divine infinity. Here what we have called the hermeneutical experience finds its own, special ground. (Gadamer 1989:428)

This formal similarity in the approach taken to hermeneutics by Barth and Gadamer lies in their common interest in opposing all methodological approaches to hermeneutics because such approaches determine in advance what may be revealed in the act of interpretation. Barth will not accept such advance determination because he wishes to acknowledge the possibility that God will reveal God's self. Gadamer will not accept such advance determination because he believes that such methodological commitments predetermine ontology. But ontology is precisely what

---

[9] Gadamer goes so far as to call Barth's *Romans* "a kind of manifesto." See Gadamer 1989:509. On this same page Gadamer specifies theology and jurisprudence as areas where concern for concrete work in the human sciences and an explicit criticism of historical objectivism or positivism led to a turning away from a naive methodologism. It is in this respect that Gadamer cites theology and jurisprudence as areas in which it can be learned that hermeneutics must be ontological rather then methodological.

Gadamer believes emerges as being gives itself to understanding in language. The underlying material difference between the two positions is critical, though. Gadamer's position involves a commitment to a universal ontology emerging in the tradition of interpretation. As universal, this would include the possibility that God gives God's self to be known in revelation. Although such a position is more formally compatible with Barth's than that of Dilthey or Betti,[10] the position that Barth has taken implies that even such a non-methodological hermeneutics must not, in its claim to universality, be permitted to prejudice in advance either the possibility or the content of revelation.

Such a hermeneutics can be considered compatible with the position that Barth takes in only a non-symmetric way. This means that the priority that God takes over every human possibility, methodology, or ontology in revelation may well teach us that just as who God is emerges in revelation in such a way that human methodology and ontology must conform to revelation in an act of interpretation in order to know God, so also the ontology of things and of being itself must be permitted to emerge into human understanding in language through acts of interpretation. But this cannot mean that such a hermeneutics can make the revelation of God possible or determine how or who God may reveal God's self to be. This is a result of Barth's material decision, derived from his study of Paul's epistle to the Romans, that God does not reveal God's self to be the fulfillment of human possibilities but rather their crisis. It is this element of judgment upon and denial of merely human possibilities that is present even in the positive moments of Barth's understanding of revelation that make it impossible for his position to consider the possibility of being grounded in a hermeneutics such as Gadamer's. This means that the difference between Barth and Gadamer as to the reality that gives rise to hermeneutics, God in self-revelation or being itself, is a true and material difference. I judge that Barth's position implies that God is not being itself, and that if there is such a thing as being itself, then it is a creature and subject to the sovereignty of God.

This asymmetric possibility of compatibility between Barth's biblical hermeneutic and Gadamer's ontological hermeneutic can be extended. Barth's doctrine of the threefold form of the word of God means that it is

10 See Palmer 1969:54-60 for a summary of Betti's position and a discussion of his argument with Gadamer.

not the text alone which holds and gives meaning in interpretation, nor the act of interpretation in which the Church proclaims and hears the text, but primarily and above all the subject of the text and of the act of interpretation, the Word itself, Jesus Christ, which gives rise to the meaning that emerges in the act of interpretation. It is the being of Jesus Christ as the subject of both the text and the interpretive proclamation of the Church that is, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, determinative of the act of interpretation. This means that interpretation is neither something that we do to the text or that the text does to us, but rather that the subject matter of the text grasps us so that, as those who are mastered by the subject matter, we are able to investigate the humanity of the word in which it comes to us (Barth 1956:470).

> The sovereign freedom of this subject matter to speak of itself imposes on us in the face of the word as such and its historicity an ἐποχή [a check, or a stoppage], of which there can be no inkling if we presuppose the comical doctrine that the true exegete has no presuppositions, and against which we consistently and most flagrantly offend if we presuppose that doctrine. (Barth 1956:470)

In this respect Barth's hermeneutic is like Gadamer's. For Gadamer the subject of the text is of critical importance, for ultimately the subject is being, which determines the back and forth of play between the text and the interpreter, grasping them, in order that it might emerge into language in the act of interpretation.[11] For this reason Gadamer also considers the doctrine of presuppositionless interpretation to be comical, for, as we have seen above, it is precisely in the forestructures constituted in the tradition out of which the interpreter works that the possibility of understanding lies. Again, the difference must not be neglected that Barth takes

---

[11] It must be remembered here that Barth does not permit the event of the Word of God, the subject of the text, to become an attribute of the text. The miracle that the text becomes the Word of God for us does not inhere once for all in the text. We can only recollect that we have heard the word of God in this text and hope and expect to hear it here again. See Barth 1956:530. Barth consistently maintains the priority of the subject of the text, the being who reveals himself in the interpretive hearing of this text by the church, over both the text and the Church that interprets the text.

this position because of who God is in the act of revelation, and Gadamer on general ontological grounds.

The significance of tradition as a source of fore-understandings which are constitutive in the act of understanding and interpretation, which is so critical to Gadamer's project, is not neglected by Barth. For him the authority of the Church under the word of God is expressed in the tradition of the Church's confessions (Barth 1956:589). The confession is the authority of the Church, to which its members are bound to listen (Barth 1956:593). This agreement, the confession, has only a preliminary significance, which is always subject to revision in the light of "such further discussions as become necessary" in which the confession is "again questioned, transcended and corrected by the Word of God as newly read and understood (Barth 1956:592)." But the confession which has this preliminary significance is itself the product of the hearing of the word of God in the text of the Scripture (Barth 1956:594, 596).

In all this the formal similarities to Gadamer are clear. Tradition as authoritative, as the source of preliminary fore-understandings, as revisable in the ongoing act of interpretation, and as the embodiment of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the text can all be recognized here. The critical difference, of course, is that for Gadamer these are universal features of the act of understanding, whereas for Barth they are features of a biblical hermeneutic because God reveals God's self when, where, how, and as God wills. This is because the being which emerges into language in the text of the Scripture and the proclamation of the Church is not universal being, but rather a most particular being, Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity, God with us. Relative to this person even *being* can only be a creature, not an ultimate source. And Jesus Christ, being a person, is actively in control of the process of interpretation.[12] This active agency is expressed in Barth's assertion that the Word of God is capable of calling forth better readings for itself and that "above and beyond the power of resistance and criticism, it has the power of assimilating and making serviceable to itself the alien elements it encounters" (Barth 1956:682).

---

[12] Barth 1956:672. "For Scripture itself is a really truly living, acting and speaking subject which only as such can be truly heard and received by the Church and in the Church." In view of Barth's doctrine of the threefold form of the *one* word of God I believe it is correct to understand this "really truly living, acting and speaking subject" as Jesus Christ, understood as member of the trinity.

The last point of consonance with Gadamer that I want to call attention to here is Barth's assertion that the form of human freedom under the Word is the assumption of responsibility for the interpretation and application of Scripture (Barth 1956:710-15). In the context of the explication of this freedom as responsibility for interpretation Barth says that "all human concepts, ideas and convictions" must be freely submitted to the "witness of revelation supplied to us in Scripture" (Barth 1956:715, 719). This is similar to the revisabilty of fore-understandings in the interpretive encounter with the text wherein the temporal distance between ourselves and the text enables us to foreground our prejudices in such a way as to make the critical judgments between true and false prejudices (see Gadamer 1989:266-7, 288-9). Critical to the task of interpretation for both Barth and Gadamer is the interpretive act of application. Barth insists that without application there is, in fact, no true explication or meditation upon what is said to us in Scripture (Barth 1956:736). Gadamer takes the task of application as so critical to the problem of hermeneutics as to say that its necessary inclusion in the task of interpretation gives us the "task of *redefining the hermeneutics of the human sciences in terms of legal and theological hermeneutics*" (Gadamer 1989:310-11, Cf. 307-10).

Barth's understanding of hermeneutics is asymmetrically compatible with Gadamer's primarily because of Gadamer's ontological conception of hermeneutics which has learned about the significance of the word of man in general from the history of the word of man in the Bible where it is shaped by the task of giving witness to the self revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The asymmetry in this compatibility arises from the asymmetrical relation of being itself to the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. I tend to assume, as a reviseable forestructure of interpretation and because Gadamer does not address the issue directly, that for Gadamer the relationship between being itself and God is symmetrical. If this is the case, then Gadamer's hermeneutics can be truly a universal ontology. But for Barth this can only be acceptable if it is a universal ontology of the universe which God created, and not a universe which contains God within itself. For Barth, the relationship between being itself and God is asymmetrical.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

The next task is to consider how the difference in underlying assumptions between Barth and Gadamer permits Barth to elucidate a hermeneutic which is able to teach Gadamer's more general ontological hermeneutics at some points. Two points which will be considered here are the problem of systematic misunderstanding and the value and function of critical theory. These are points at which Habermas has taken issue with Gadamer as well. Because Barth does not address these points in the context of general hermeneutics it will be helpful at this point to examine the criticism that Habermas makes of Gadamer on the issues of systematic misunderstanding and the value and function of critical theory. This will help to make apparent why the lessons that biblical hermeneutics has to teach are relevant and applicable to Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics, but it will have to be noted that this possibility in Barth does not occur in a way that is compatible with the theory of Habermas.

Now Gadamer is aware of the problem of misunderstanding, as such.[13] Right after his discussion of the reviseability of fore-understandings in the act of interpretation he deals with the problem of misunderstanding.

> If we examine the situation more closely, however, we find that meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. Just as we cannot continually misunderstand the use of a word without its affecting the meaning of the whole, so we cannot stick blindly to our own fore-meaning about the thing if we want to understand the meaning of another. ... All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text. But this openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relation to it. Now, the fact is that meanings represent a fluid multiplicity of possibilities ... but within this multiplicity of what can be thought ... not everything is possible; and if a person fails to hear what the other person or text is really saying, he will not be able to fit what he has misunderstood into the range of his own various expectations of meaning. (Gadamer 1989:268-9)

---

[13] See Gadamer 1989:184-185 where Gadamer shows his awareness of this problem in his discussion of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics.

But though Gadamer addresses the problem of misunderstanding, he does not address the problem of *systematic* misunderstanding. An appropriate attitude on the part of the interpreter is called for in Gadamer's hermeneutics in order to deal with the problem of misunderstanding. Notice the phrases in the passage just quoted, "we cannot ... if we want ... all that is asked ... we remain open ... our situating ... if a person fails to hear ..." The problem of *systematic* misunderstanding is precisely that the appropriate attitude of the interpreter is not present. Gadamer says that "the goal of all attempts to reach understanding is an agreement concerning the subject matter" (Gadamer 1989:292). But in systematically distorted communication this is precisely what does not occur. Two cases that Habermas specifies are the problem of the critique of ideologies, where ideologues are not interested in an agreement about the subject matter, but rather the imposition of their viewpoint upon others, domination masquerading as agreement (Habermas 1985:300), and pseudo-communication, in which an apparent agreement between parties is not recognized as a misunderstanding because the parties do not recognize that they understand what they apparently agree upon in different ways (Habermas 1985:302).

The problem of systematically distorted communication can be dealt with in Gadamer's hermeneutics, and I will shortly indicate the most obvious way of doing so. But it must be said immediately that it is a clear failing in Gadamer's original work not to deal with this problem specifically, but to leave it subsumed under the cover of the problem of misunderstanding generally.

For Habermas the corrective to the problem of systematically distorted communication in ideological critique, and the problem of pseudo communication, especially its characteristic mode as a pathological symptom of neurosis, mental illness, or psychosomatic disturbance, is what he calls depth-hermeneutics (Habermas 1985:310-12). Depth hermeneutics is hermeneutics as supplemented by a critical theory. Depth hermeneutics must be supplemented by a critical theory because its job is to clarify distortions that have to do with the nature of language itself (Habermas 1985:311). For Habermas ideology, pseudo communication, and the pathological language of mental illness are possibilities derived from the nature of language itself and its relation to the prelinguistic realities upon which it is founded. For this reason

depth hermeneutical understanding requires a systematic preconception which has to do with language as a whole, whereas hermeneutical understanding begins, in each case, from a preconception defined by the tradition which is formed and altered within linguistic communication. (Habermas 1985:311)

This systematic preconception is critical theory. The necessity of a critical theory for the interpretation of systematically distorted communication seems to tempt Habermas to expect a foundational critical theory. Susan Hekman agrees at this point.

Despite his sympathy for hermeneutic analysis Habermas is not willing to concede that methodic knowledge in either the social or natural sciences always presupposes a background of hermeneutic understanding. Like the Enlightenment thinkers, Habermas posits a realm in which we can transcend prejudice and achieve objective knowledge. In the last analysis this is a realm that is not linguistically constituted and thus not subject to a "linguistically articulated consciousness." (Hekman 1986:132-3)

I believe that Habermas is right about the necessity of a critical theory for the interpretation of systematically distorted communication. His mistake lies in the assumption that only a universal and objective critical theory can serve this function. First of all, there is no such thing. Second of all, a non-foundational, hermeneutically produced critical tradition, revising its fore-understandings of its subject matter as it continues to interrogate and interpret its subject matter, is sufficient to the task. This will mean that no one critical theory will be capable of interpreting and dissolving all cases of systematically distorted communication. But that is not the same thing as saying that there will be no critical theory.[14]

---

[14] Evidence that hermeneutics can apply itself to the kind of systematic misunderstanding involved in pathological mental illness by understanding the psychotherapeutic theory of the psychologist as a hermeneutic tradition is given in the final section of Reagan 1979:153-9. That this article, even though specifically about the hermeneutical analysis of Paul Ricoeur, can be understood as also describing a possibility in the hermeneutics of Gadamer was pointed out by Hekman 1986:150.

I believe that such forms of critical theory can be accommodated within Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics. Certainly Gadamer understands that hermeneutics calls for critical judgment, especially in the distinguishing of true and false prejudices.[15] Certainly also, Gadamer would recognize what Habermas calls critical theory as a tradition in the sense that Gadamer has defined. But, in line with his rejection of all Enlightenment perspectives claiming a universal epistemology, he would refuse to grant its claims while admitting its validity as a tradition of prejudices structuring the fore-conceptions of its practitioners in the acts of interpretation to which they apply themselves. That is to say, Gadamer's hermeneutics cannot be construed as a rejection of critical theory, but only as a demotion of critical theory. Of course, any practitioner of critical theory making universal claims of objectivity would be forced to regard such a demotion as a rejection.

What is at issue in the specification of a critical theory, whether it is to be regarded in a foundational or a non-foundational way, is justice. Gadamer makes it clear that ethics is not his intention in his hermeneutical project, but rather, making explicit what takes place in all acts of understanding and interpretation (Gadamer 1989:xxx). This is not to say that he in any way opposes ethical reflection. Indeed, he considers his project to be a contribution to clear thinking upon the problem of moral knowledge, especially as it finds its place within the context of Aristotelean reflection upon the nature of practical wisdom.[16] But in so doing, he is like Kant in *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. He speaks philo-

[15] Gadamer 1989:269-70. On this point, see also Hekman 1986:136. "Haberma's basic objection to Gadamer's position is that it precludes the possibility of critique. Gadamer vehemently denies that this follows from his position. His reference to 'critical reason' and a 'higher objectivity' are indications that he sees the possibility of critique as central to his conception of hermeneutics. Indeed, he defines the principle task of hermeneutics as the separation of true from false prejudice. The opposition between Gadamer and Habermas does not therefore lie in whether or not critical reason can be said to exist, but rather in its definition and extent."

[16] Gadamer 1989:312-24. See also the articles "What is Practice? The Conditions of Social Reason," pp. 69-87, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," pp. 88-112, and "Hermeneutics as Practical and Theoretical Task," pp. 113-138, in Gadamer 1981. All of these essays speak about the contribution of hermeneutics to an understanding of the universal conditions of practical and moral thinking. But justice is not mentioned.

sophically about the conditions for the possibility of practical and moral thought, but he does not actually engage in any such thought directly. Now, Habermas's concern with critical theory is also only an investigation into the possibility of practical and ethical thought, but it is much more immediate to the task than Gadamer's hermeneutics. His concern is appropriate. We would like to believe that concern for issues of justice is an immediate and *inescapable* part of practical reasoning. Perhaps this is not so. Certainly Gadamer's hermeneutics gives us no guarantee on this count. But it is a matter that ought to be addressed explicitly, and not left lying beneath the rubric of practical reasoning in general.

Where Gadamer fails is in making clear the legitimacy of critical theory within his own understanding of hermeneutics for addressing systematically distorted communication and issues of justice. Where a debate truly exists in an issue like this we are bound to assume that there must be some truth on both sides, else the issue would not long maintain itself. If there is truth on both sides then each side is responsible not only to show how it is right and the other is wrong, but also and most importantly, how what is right about the other side can be fruitfully incorporated into its own understanding. Habermas attempts this task, adapting hermeneutics to his critical theoretical position as depth hermeneutics. Gadamer, even though I judge him to be right on the most basic issues, does not address this task. And it must be addressed because Gadamer's hermeneutics needs to be corrected and supplemented in response to the protest that Habermas raises on the issues of systematically distorted communication and critical theory.

Barth does not address the general problem of systematically distorted communication. But he does address the problem in connection with the particular task of interpreting the scripture.

> As the orthodox Protestants were fond of saying, Holy Scripture was the *facultas semetipsam interpretandi* which at any rate means the power sooner or later to throw off every foreign sense attributed to it, to mark and to expose its perversity, and in contrast to assert itself in its own characteristic meaning. ... Scripture is exposed but not delivered over to the understanding and misunderstanding of the world. Scripture is in the hands but not the power of the Church. It speaks as it is translated, interpreted and applied. But always in and even in spite of all these human efforts, it is Scripture itself which speaks. (Barth 1956:681-2)

Considering that this characterization of the freedom of the word follows upon a section in which Barth discusses the emergence of the Protestant reading of the Scripture after centuries of Roman Catholic readings that Barth considers to have distorted essential features of the Scripture, I think we must consider this assertion to be applicable not merely to the general problem of misunderstanding, but specifically to the problem of systematically distorted communication. But it is to be noted that Barth does not rely upon a critical theory to unravel such systematic distortion, but upon God's gracious action of revelation in God's freedom. This avoids the difficulties inherent in any enlightenment modelled critical theory which claims to be the one true form of reason. It does, however, submit itself to a different difficulty. The possibility of correcting systematically distorted communication, in the interpretation of Scripture, at least, is made to depend explicitly upon the actuality of God, and upon God's gracious will to reveal God's self, even to precisely those people who have refused to understand and have rejected God. If there is no God, or if God does not graciously will to reveal God's self to covenant breakers, then there is no solution in Barth's biblical hermeneutics to the problem of such systematically distorted communication as must always exist where sinners interpret the Scripture.

At the same time the possibility of a relationship to a critical theory here must not be neglected. The fact that Barth does not rely upon a critical theory, but upon God's will to reveal God's self, to ground the possibility of correcting systematic misunderstanding in the interpretation of Scripture does not mean that no such theory is present. Barth has made it clear throughout that revelation does not occur as the appearance of an inhuman possibility within human language, but rather as a divine commandeering of human language. For this reason Barth acknowledges plainly that everyone who approaches the Scripture to interpret it does so with some sort of philosophy, either more or less explicit (Barth 1956:728-9). The fact that the Word of God reveals itself precisely to such interpreters, for there are no others, means that every manner of thought that we bring with ourselves in reflecting upon Scripture can only have the character of an essay or an hypothesis (Barth 1956:730). But it does have this character, and in fact, to venture such hypotheses is necessary to obedience in the task of interpreting Scripture (Barth 1956:731).

> I shall have to remember that grace is implied if my attempt and there-
> fore my mode of thought can become useful to this end. After each

attempt I shall also have to be willing and ready to proceed to new attempts. And I cannot exclude the possibility that the same attempt can and must be ventured with the application of quite other philosophies than mine. Therefore I shall not radically deny to other philosophies than my own the character of useful hypotheses in the service of the same end. (Barth 1956:731)

Where what is revealed in the Word of God is the judgment of God upon all things human it will be no surprise if the philosophy which the Word of God commandeers for its use is a critical theory. Since the judgment of God is always revealed in the Word of God, even as God's grace is always revealed as the ground and conclusion of judgment, some critical theory will always be appropriate, under the reservation offered above. Barth himself made extensive use of socialist theory in interpreting the judgment of God upon the conditions of Swiss society in his sermons of the year 1913 (McCormack 1995:78-125). But the reservation is of critical importance because it means that no one critical theory is privileged, but rather that critical theory, though necessary, is always *ad hoc*. And this is precisely the relationship between critical theory and hermeneutics that I called for in Gadamer's project in the light of the criticisms of Habermas. Now Barth is making these claims in respect to the project of biblical interpretation, but he means them to be understood as applying thereby to all human endeavors, just as he intends that hermeneutics in general should learn from biblical hermeneutics. What comes through strongly in the early sermons, as well as in the *Epistle to the Romans,* is the strength of Barth's commitment to justice. But it is also clear in these materials that he does not trust *any* human theory as the final arbiter of justice, but only the revelation of God. And this puts Barth's position under the same reservation mentioned before, that if there is no God, or if God does not will to reveal God's self, then Barth's position has no other resources from which to derive a critique that will serve justice.

If this reservation is kept in mind, then it will be seen that Barth's biblical hermeneutics is capable of instructing Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics on the issues of systematic misunderstanding and the value and function of critical theory without falling prey to the foundationalist Enlightenment stance that Habermas seems to take in his advocacy of critical theory. There will be no one universal critical theory, but there will be an endless variety of *ad hoc* critical theories arising from precisely the

same source as hermeneutics itself, the encounter with God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Barth's commitment to the priority of God in revelation leads him to deny to general hermeneutics, as it was conceived in his own time, any priority in determining the nature and character of the act of interpretation. Because hermeneutics at that time claimed a determinative general methodology Barth's denial must be taken in the most negative sense, as a judgment that a hermeneutics which could not acknowledge the power of God to reveal God's self was pathologically ill. The same commitment would have forced Barth to deny the universality of a hermeneutics such as Gadamer's because God cannot be regarded as the fulfillment of the human possibilities inherent in a general description of the interpretive act of understanding. This denial does not need to be taken in as strongly negative a sense though. A hermeneutics such as Gadamer's need not be regarded as pathologically sick if it is denied any universality which claims to include the possibility of God's self revelation. Methodological hermeneutics must be denied, but ontological hermeneutics only needs to be demoted. Now if Gadamer's ontological hermeneutics is taken in what I earlier called the hard sense, then Barth's position will have to deny it in the same sense and for the same reason as methodological hermeneutics was denied. But if it is taken in the soft sense, then it can be regarded as asymmetrically compatible with Barth's position on Biblical hermeneutics.

But when it is so used it will be found that the same priority of God in self revelation which expresses itself in judgment upon all things human, revealed in the Word of God as part and parcel of the grace of God, also acts as a constant stimulus and corrective to hermeneutics. In this way Barth's biblical hermeneutics addresses the problem of systematically distorted communication, in the interpretation of the Scripture at least. It also justifies, in a relative, temporary, and hypothetical way, the use of critical theory in biblical interpretation. In this way it serves as a ground for the possibility of addressing issues of justice and distorted communication in human experience at large. But this possibility exists within Barth's position only as a possibility of faith, dependent always upon the reality of God and the will of God so to reveal God's self.

REFERENCES

Barth, Karl
    1933   *The Epistle to the Romans*. Translated by Edwyn C.
                Hoskins. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
    1956   *Church Dogmatics*, volume I part 2. Translated by G. T.
                Thompson and Harold Knight. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.
    1975   *Church Dogmatics*, volume I part 1. Translated by G. W.
                Bromiley. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg
    1976   *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Edited and translated by
                David E. Linge. Berkeley and Los Angelos, California:
                University of California Press, Ltd.
    1981   *Reason in the Age of Science*. Translated by Frederick G.
                Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
    1989   *Truth and Method*. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer
                and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Continuum.

Habermas, Jürgen
    1985   "On Hermeneutics Claim to Universality," in *The Herme-
                neutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the
                Enlightenment to the Present*. Edited by Kurt Mueller-
                Vollmer. Continuum.

Heidegger, Martin
    1962   *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and
                Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Hekman, Susan J.
    1986   *Hermeneutics and the Sociology of Knowledge*. Notre
                Dame, Indiana: The university of Notre Dame Press.

McCormack, Bruce L.
    1995   *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its
                Genesis and Development, 1909-1936*. Oxford: Oxford
                Press.

Mendelson, Jack
    1979   "The Habermas – Gadamer Debate," in *New German
                Critique*, Number 18, Fall 1979, pp. 45-72.

Palmer, Richard E.
  1969   *Hermeneutics*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Reagan, Charles
  1979   "Psychoanalysis as Hermeneutics," in *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Tarski, Alfred
  1976   *Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics: Papers from 1923 to 1938*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

BOOK REVIEWS

Les Livres de Samuel. By André Caquot and Phillippe de Robert. *Commentaire de L'Ancien Testament VI.* Editions Labor et Fides, 1994, 649 pages.

This major new French-language commentary will serve as a useful survey of critical research in the two books of Samuel through 1992. Caquot/ de Robert remain in conversation with other scholars throughout, including rabbinic commentators such as Rashi. Their references are extensive, clear, and conveniently set forth.

Each chapter of the commentary begins with a translation of the text according to the commentators' divisions. The fact that this translation always represents the Masoretic Text signals a significant decision on the part of the commentators. The Septuagint text of Samuel is longer than that of the MT and contains numerous variant readings. Many of these readings are preferred by other scholars over the readings of the MT. Notably, Kyle McCarter in his *Anchor Bible* commentaries on Samuel presented an eclectic text, arguing that it was "no longer possible to defend a textual reconstruction that relies exclusively on the MT or turns to the versions only when the MT is unintelligible" (McCarter, *I Samuel*, p. 8). Caquot/ de Robert are fairly explicit about their intention to do just that, noting their distinction from McCarter. In their view the longer length of the LXX is primarily due to its tendency to explicate and clarify the Hebrew text, with an accompanying interest in imposing an internal coherence within the Samuel narratives and a tendency to har-

monize the Samuel material with other biblical books, especially Chronicles and the Pentateuch (cf. *Les Livres de Samuel* p. 11). In each chapter, their translation of the text is followed by a section of textual notes, and this section is consistently largely devoted to the variant LXX readings. One of the useful features of this volume is that it thus clearly sets out the LXX readings, which enables the reader to get a sense of the LXX text and its differences from the MT more easily than with an eclectic presentation such as McCarter's. However, even if the MT is the preferred text (an option that is widely contested), this general preference cannot establish the superiority of individual variant readings. Caquot/ de Robert do address many of these readings within their commentary, but only rarely do they judge in favor of the LXX reading. The scholar using their volume may greatly benefit from their graphic presentation of variants without necessarily accepting their persistent preference for the MT. This commitment to the MT, explicitly argued in the introductory chapter and evident throughout the textual discussions, constitutes one of the unifying themes of the commentary.

The most original feature of their commentary is their theory on the formation of the books. Like the preference for the MT, this argument is initially set forth in the introductory chapter and then manifests itself throughout the volume. Caquot/ de Robert argue for a three-fold redaction of the narratives. At the first level of redaction, a writer of the Elide circles of Shiloh—whom they tentatively identify with Abiathar, the lone survivor of Saul's massacre of the priestly family at Nob (1 Sam 22)—assembled various sacral and tribal traditions to form a pro-David, anti-Saul polemic. This "Abiathar" source, itself composite, has been heavily revised, and in some instances turned on its head, by a Zadokite redactor. Zadok was the Jerusalemite priest, aligned with Solomon, who displaced Abiathar during the succession struggle which ensued near the end of David's reign (1 Kgs 2). Abiathar was aligned with Solomon's brother Adonijah, as was Joab. Adonijah and Joab lost their lives, Abiathar lost his office, and the "Abiathar redactor" lost control of the narrative record. The Zadokite redactor is responsible for the hostile portrayal of Joab and his brothers, as well as for the oracle against the house of Eli in 1 Sam 2. Finally, the work underwent a Deuteronomic revision when it was incorporated into the larger historical work extending from Joshua through 2 Kings.

Theories concerning the composition of the books of Samuel are invariably, perhaps inevitably, reductionistic, and this argument is no exception. The analysis might have been more convincing if Caquot/ de Robert were less intent on explaining all aspects of the text according to this theory of redaction. To cite a pivotal example: David's deception of Ahimelek, the priest of Nob, in 1 Sam 21—the encounter which leads to Saul's massacre of the priestly city soon after—is interpreted as a Zadokite satire upon the gullible Elide priest. Caquot/ de Robert detach David's deception in chapter 21 from its consequence in chapter 22: the massacre itself represents an Elide tradition, recounting how Abiathar survived the massacre and entered the service of David. The verse in which David acknowledges his responsibility for the death of Abiathar's family (1 Sam 22:22) is assigned to the Zadokite redactor, with the suggestion that it indicates not David's guilt, but his latent hostility toward the Elide house. (Caquot/ de Robert do not, of course, suggest that David felt such antipathy: it is the literary creation of the Zadokite redactor.) This analysis does not seem to allow for a nuanced narrative portrayal of David. The ambiguities of his character are the result only of the conflicting agendas of the various redactors. Caquot/ de Robert have made a disciplined attempt to understand the forces which drove the formation of the text, but their commentary has become an apology for their theory of composition at the expense of their elucidation of the text.

— SHAWN AARON ARMINGTON
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnivalesque. By Kenneth M. Craig. Westminster/John Knox, 1995, 192 pages.

In recent years, the work of the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin has stimulated a number of biblical scholars to read and interpret biblical texts in new ways. In *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnivalesque,* Kenneth Craig borrows Bakhtin's theory of carnival, which the latter developed most fully in *Rabelais and His World,* to illumine the book of Esther.

In his Introduction, Craig presents a brief overview of Bakhtin and his major literary theories, together with an apology explaining why it is appropriate to link Bakhtin (whose work concentrates primarily on the relatively recent genre of the novel) to ancient narratives such as Esther. He argues (rightly I think) that what Bakhtin means by "novelistic discourse" is not restricted to novels, but may be found in a variety of genres, both ancient and modern.

The literary carnivalesque is characterized by, among other things, parody, travesty, reversals, crownings and uncrownings, a sense of play, and above all, a relativization of the apparently stable structures that govern society. The central thesis of the book is laid out in chapter 2, viz., that the Esther narrative represents an early example of the literary Carnivalesque, in which a "folk-carnivalistic base ... has been collected and artistically rendered" (34). To argue his case, Craig first examines the images of the banquet and the open market, suggesting that they function in Esther to create an unofficial culture of the folk which is opposed to the official culture of the king and court (ch. 3).

In chapter 4, Craig highlights the numerous peripeties (reversals of situation or circumstance) in Esther, seeing these reversals as evidence of the carnivalesque, in which reversals of all kinds are central. The extreme violence of chapters 8 and 9 of Esther is explained by Craig in chapter 5 as a coherent element in the carnivalesque precisely because of its lack of proportion to what has preceded; carnival is about excess, and this is a "carnivalesque war." Finally in chapter 6, Craig examines the relationship between carnival and the festival of Purim.

At first glance, Craig's one-to-one mapping of Bakhtin's notion of carnival onto the literary elements in Esther may seem compelling, but ultimately I find the fit rather artificial. Esther as a whole reads quite differently from other forms of carnivalistic discourse. While there are certainly some comic moments, there is something deadly serious about this story, namely the threat of a people's extinction, that refuses characterization as playful, as joyously relativistic, as a depiction of the "folk's" reveling in egalitarian values. In spite of these reservations, Craig's detailed study of the text presents a number of stimulating insights into the story and is worth reading.

— JACQ LAPSLEY
EMORY UNIVERSITY

The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change. By Bezalel Porten with J. Joel Farber, Cary J. Martin, Günter Vittmann, Leslie S. B. MacCoull, Sarah Clackson, and contributions by Simon Hopkins and Ramon Katzoff. E. J. Brill, 1996, 609 pages plus indices and 11 plates.

The publication of this collection of texts from Elephantine in one volume represents a major scholarly achievement. The 175 documents, spanning a history of three thousand years, have never been accessible in one place. The several archaeological teams that worked at the island of Elephantine during the ninteenth and twentieth centuries were supported by different governments. When documents were found they were scattered to museums in London, Paris, Turin, Brooklyn, Oxford, Cairo, Chicago, Munich, and to private collections. Most of the texts were eventually published singly in various journals over a period of many years. The binding of the texts together in one place neatly camouflages this scattering as well as the untidy publication history. All of the texts are preceded by a concise introduction, giving its current location, explanatory title, as well as vital statistics such as the date, size, author, recipient, scribe, and previous publication record. The volume includes indices on topics such as law, family, economy and occupations, deities, calendar, and toponyms. Eleven plates of photographed documents complete the volume.

Elephantine was occupied by an assortment of ethnic and religious groups. The texts witness to the variety of their languages such as Hieratic, Aramaic, Demotic, Coptic, Arabic, and Latin. There are legal documents pertaining to marriage and adoption, instructions regarding religious observances, protests against unjustified tax demands and corrupt officials, even drinking songs and cough prescriptions (drink a mixture of wine, *ro*, and salt in the morning and vomit it at noon). They are written by everyone from slaves to military generals and temple personel.

Biblical and Jewish scholars, as well as ancient historians, will find the texts from the Persian and Greek periods (ca 521-30 BCE) most useful. These documents contain a wealth of information regarding the sociopolitical world and epistolary style. The eleven Aramaic contracts from the Mibtahiah archive, for example, reveal the economic rights and transactions of a Jewish woman in the fifth century BCE. Her detailed

dowry lists the items that she brought to the marriage such as bowls, oil, sandals, and a papyrus-leaf bed, with the worth of each item noted along the side. Her marriage contract and a deed of her father's shows that she could inherit property and retain her pecuniary rights to it in the case of divorce or the death of her husband.

The religious life of Elephantine Jews is also well documented. The YHW temple was in existence from at least 525 BCE, with meal-offerings, incense-offerings, and holocaust-offerings made in it. Two rough drafts of letters from the Jewish priests and nobles to Bagavahya, the Persian governor, detail how the Egyptian priests of Khnum, with the bribed permission of the local Persian authority, destroyed the temple of YHW. Panicked, the Jewish authorities at Elephantine wrote to their fellow Jews in Jerusalem but received no response. Eventually the Persian governor sent a directive to the colony allowing the Jews to rebuild a house of offering "as it was formerly", complete with the re-institution of the meal—and incense—offerings. Curiously absent from the directive is permission to engage in meat sacrifice. Although on the surface the authorities allow for the "restoration" of Elephantine worship to pre-411 practice, the directive sets up radical changes. What is implicit in this directive is explicit in an offer of payment for the reconstruction of the temple, made after 407 BCE by five men: if "the temple of YHW the God be built in Elephantine the fortress as it was former[ly bu]ilt — and sheep, ox, and goat are [n]ot made there as burnt-offering but [they offer there] (only) incense (and) meal-offering — and should our lord mak[e] a statement [about this, then] we shall give to the house of our lord si[lver ... and] a thousa[nd] ardabs of barley." Although Jerusalem may have silent on the matter of rebuilding the Elephantine temple, both the Persian authority and property holding Jews in Elephantine voice their opinion that burnt offerings are not to be continued in the new worship area. Unfortunately the Elephantine documents are not explicit about the cause of this change in cult practice. It has been suggested that the governor, as a proper Zoroastrian, was troubled by the specter of placing an animal in fire and thus disallowed the practice. Yet this does not completely answer why five Jewish men, one of them a leader and probably a priest, requested that meat sacrifice no longer continue. Why did the Persian imperium, reportedly so supportive of the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem, disallow sacrifice in Elephantine? And why did not Jerusalem

come to the rescue? In the nature of primary documents, the texts are vivid with respect to events but cloudy with respect to cause.

It is presumably the expectation of the editor that some of the questions that the texts raise will be clarified by reading them in the fuller context of all of the Elephantine documents. The motives of the Khnum priests who tore down the YHW temple may be clarified by reading the Demotic papers since they hint at the relation between the Persian satrap and the Egyptian priesthood. Yet only historians interested in the longest *longue duree* will be able to connect the three thousand years of texts. Scholars using this volume will also need to consult earlier publications since no transcription or sketches are provided and the photographic plates include only eleven documents. The value of this publication is to remind scholars often confined to one language group that texts in other languages may contribute to interpretational issues.

—MELODY D. GIDDINGS KNOWLES
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Yahweh the Patriarch: Ancient Images of God and Feminist Theology.* Translated by Fredrick J. Gaiser. Fortress Press, 1996, 168 pages.

Erhard S. Gerstenberger is one of the best known German scholars writing today. He has written well received works and would be considered by most Americans to be a member in good standing of the "Old Guard" of biblical interpretation. It is, then, a welcome surprise to have a book by a traditional scholar that explores and takes seriously feminist criticism of traditional biblical scholarship. Gerstenberger frames the issue in the preface: "... the church and its theology must ask itself troubling questions about the male dominance practiced on earth and visualized in heaven. This debate can only be conducted with relentless honesty and with full respect for everyone involved—those now living as well as our ancestors in faith stretching back into biblical times" (ix). The parameters he sets for the debate are consistent throughout the book, making the work as a whole more of a biblical theology than a strict biblical studies piece. In addition, his clear descriptions of ancient

Near Eastern religious and cultural practices combined with the situation in the churches in Germany and America in the modern period provides a very useful guide for those interested in theology, the history of interpretation, or feminist studies. Gerstenberger provides information for theological discussion that is normally reserved only for those with a specialty in ancient Near Eastern religion and culture. This alone is worth the price of the book.

The introductory chapter sets out the current problem. Gerstenberger stresses the theological tension of God's unknowablity on the one hand, and the biblical witness of describing God on the other. He raises the central question for the next eight chapters, "[d]oes our biblical tradition necessarily present and presuppose an exclusively male picture of God, growing out of a hopelessly patriarchal society? Or prior to and alongside the Israelite Yahweh and the Greek Kyrios, were there mother deities that have somehow been fused together with the patriarchal images of God?" (xi)

The next chapters center on his research into this question. In the first, titled "Yahweh, the Father," Gerstenberger begins with the exilic period, arguing that it is here that Israel's theology is formed. This theology is defined primarily by the loss of Israel's nation status and the exile experience so that God as Father is articulated as a relational metaphor. But this metaphor of father arises from a specific situation and subsequently should not be universalized to a mandate on "God's sexual nature or the place of women in the community" (5).

In the next two chapters, Gerstenberger investigates two female deities known in Palestine during the biblical period: Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven, and Yahweh's Asherah. Using biblical texts and archaeological discoveries, Gerstenberger argues that while monotheism was the standard line in the biblical text, this mandate was written back into Israel's history by post-exilic writers. The real situation was one of worship not only of Yahweh, but of other gods of ancient Near Eastern origin. Additionally, Gerstenberger argues, these two feminine images were not excised from Israel's religious practice because of their gender, but simply because the post-exilic focus was on strict monotheism. In an interesting and often overlooked observation, Gerstenberger points out that Israel had much in common with its neighbors. All ancient Near Eastern societies worshiped male and female deities, either in the official cult or in small tribal cults, but this recognition of both male and female deities did

not translate into an egalitarian social structure. On the contrary, in all of the ancient Near East, there is no evidence of an egalitarian or matriarchal culture.

In the next two chapters, he focuses on gender roles in ancient culture. He first stresses the importance of the image of a warrior God for a culture, but explains that in the ancient Near East this image is not exclusively a male deity, naming Inanna, Ishtar, and Anat as notable female goddesses with warrior characteristics. He then turns to the biblical text, pointing out that women were occasionally active in tribal war operations, citing specifically the characters of Deborah and Miriam. He posits from these examples that women, while usually involved in gender differentiated functions, were obviously not completely banned from serving in capacities traditionally associated with men. Next he discusses women's role in the domestic cult, arguing that women had a prominent role in domestic worship and were the "almost exclusive" religious educators of children.

Chapter 7 asks what these observations have to say about God in the present. He states his conclusions to the biblical situation clearly: "[t]he Bible cannot provide us with a timeless and universally binding image of God... Instead, we encounter several time conditioned statements of faith that can in no simple way be repeated in our own situation" (81). Gerstenberger has hinted at this conclusion throughout the work, always emphasizing the importance and non-transversability of Lessing's ugly ditch and the importance of contextual theology in understanding the real presence of God in the present. Then Gerstenberger turns to define Israel's actions that restricted Yahweh to a patriarchal appearance, "[i]t appears that the sexist constriction of Israel's image of God was not originally a malicious and 'necrophillic' plan of criminal male minds, but rather the un-planned long term consequence of the decision, for quite unrelated reasons, to worship the 'only God, Yahweh'" (83). Later, he calls this patriarchal direction "a theological accident" (87). He does, however, discuss that once the idea of a male God became *status quo* it was devastating for the women of ancient Israel and for the women of Jewish and Christian cultures for centuries. Then, in a chapter designed specifically for those involved in Christian churches, he calls for a reform of the church's attitudes concerning women, again stating that the current situation and the ancient world are completely different.

In the final chapter, Gerstenberger provides a treatise for a biblical theology based on the liberating God arguing that "we must seek in the Old Testament itself criteria for an understanding of God that transcends the passage of time and still have significance for our day" (133). In what appears to be a kernel and husk approach, Gerstenberger suggests a liberating God as an alternative to the patriarchal God of the past.

In summary, this book is very helpful to a wide range of readers. However, the complete impassability of the historical ditch will be troubling to many. From a feminist perspective, his insistence that women were excluded as a "theological accident" of monotheism seems simplistic. Were the men of patriarchal cultures all that innocent? In addition, his picture of a liberating God tends to smooth over the "problems" inherent in the Hebrew Bible that have been recognized by feminist scholars like Phyllis Trible. Can we in the 20th century create a loving, liberating, egalitarian God from the Hebrew Bible while ignoring the images of God the warrior, God the judge, and God the tyrant? Is this not just as one-sided as creating a theology based on monotheistic patriarchy?

Finally there is one point for which Gerstenberger deserves the highest praise. In recent years, Jewish scholars have raised a concern over feminist theology's strong focus on the patriarchy inherent in ancient Israel and its side-effect of anti-Judiasm. Gerstenberger's focus not only on Israel, but on other contemporary ancient Near Eastern societies, as well as on agriculturally based tribal societies throughout time, presents a more balanced picture that should be used in the future as a model for feminist biblical studies.

—BETH LANEEL TANNER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation. By Daniel Patte. Westminster John Knox Press, 1995, 145 pages.

In *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation*, Daniel Patte refers to himself as being truly post-modern. He is modern in that his training and presuppositions about practice and method are informed from a modern critical perspective that seeks to establish itself through

appropriate use of critical methodology. He is *post*-modern in that he acknowledges and wrestles with his own limited perspective as a "male, European/American" (MEA). This self-situated mode of interpretation is what Patte calls an "androcritical" perspective, as opposed to an androcentric view which is unaware of its own ideological leanings.

Patte, throughout *Ethics*, recounts his epistemological journey, punctuated with many paradigm shifts. He had come to recognize, through interaction with his students and colleagues, that his readings had a negative effect upon people who did not share his MEA critical perspective. Patte understands the problem as one of ethics. This sends him on a quest for a solution, in an attempt to assume responsibility for his readings. In his quest, he found two common responses to be inadequate. First, a position of advocacy, that is, to create pro-women and pro-marginalized peoples' readings. Such a position is problematic in that it patronizes those on the margins by characterizing their position for them. The second response was to listen and appropriate other's perspectives to reshape his own position. Such a response amounted to a co-opting of different positions, which is equally problematic. At the root of both proposals was his attempt to work out, methodologically and critically, a solution to the ethical problem that confronted him. To characterize the situation as a "problem to be fixed," is indicative of the MEA critical perspective. Thus, Patte realized that his attempt to correct the ethical problem was, in fact, *the* problem itself. He proposes that MEA scholars must abandon the idolatry of their perspective, while not neglecting their own maleness or European/American background. Ethical interpretation requires a multidimensional approach that allows for a multiplicity of viewpoints, and seeks to be accountable to those who are negatively affected by MEA readings. In order to be accountable, scholars must recognize that both "critical" and "ordinary" readings "belong together—rather than in a hierarchal relationship" (73).

Patte's proposal should be applauded. By taking a serious look at his own method—at his own life as a scholar—he has raised a significant challenge to himself and to those who share the MEA perspective. His honesty and willingness to be confronted with the issues at hand should serve as an example to MEA's in the scholarly community who seek to promote understanding and ethical practice within the guild. Scholars, and especially MEA scholars, who have benefitted from the hegemony of their perspective, must recognize that other approaches and perspectives

are equally valid. Patte has provided a good starting point from which to begin such a discussion.

However, Patte's discussion must undergo further refinement. In his work I recognize a dissonance between his ethics and what he describes, in Chapter Three, as the vocation of MEA scholars. According to the ethics that Patte is suggesting, interpretation must allow for a multiplicity of perspectives, and must be accountable to those who are affected by such readings. Such a stance suggests that other readings, "ordinary" as well as critical, be regarded as legitimate. Critical readings have commonly marginalized the ordinary. Academicians have assumed that the latter often produce "devastating effects" (75). An example of this can be seen in the large amount of biblical scholars who have turned to academics to address the perils of fundamentalism. Patte argues that the problem that ensued in critical biblical exegesis was identical to the problem in fundamentalism that scholars criticized, i.e., the devastating effects of a unitary perspective. Thus, the fundamentalist dogmatism was being countered by an equally dogmatic scholarly perspective that viewed the situation from an intellectual high-ground. In order to overcome this dilemma, Patte suggests that MEA biblical exegetes "should not practice exegesis in order to exclude uncritical ordinary readings, but rather in order to demonstrate the *legitimacy* of the various ordinary readings of a text" (106). Thus, the role of MEA biblical scholars is to be "*facilitators who help* ordinary readers make explicit the *legitimacy* that their ordinary readings already have" (106). Patte's suggestion implies, as he admits, the "perceived" authority of academia. He does not view the scholar's vocation to be elitist, however, since the legitimacy or illegitimacy of an ordinary reading is not based upon "their conformity or lack of conformity with the critical interpretation that serves as a benchmark" (107). Note, however, who is "helping," and who is "making explicit the legitimacy." If ordinary readings already have a legitimacy all their own, why the need to stamp them with the academic seal of approval? In other words, though his intention is to legitimate ordinary readings, Patte does so from the perspective of an elitist scholarly paradigm. It is an androcentric perspective when applied to "ordinary" women's readings, because it assumes that ordinary women, who don't benefit from the MEA perspective, need men's help to see the legitimacy of their readings. It is also an ethnocentric paternalism when considered in light of various ethnic perspectives. In this

way, MEA scholars represent the imperialistic attitudes of early West-ern/European settlers, who desired to civilize the natives. Patte seeks not to civilize other perspectives, but to intellectualize them. Thus, the MEA vocation, as described by Patte, would recreate the very ethical problem that he is trying to address. Such a contradiction is most evi-dent in his discussion of the MEA exegete's vocation in light of funda-mentalist readings. He argues that critical exegetes must seek to affirm the legitimacy of fundamentalist readings. It is only after such an af-firmation that one can be able to suggest the relative incompatibility of their readings with the inherent dogmatism present in fundamentalist faith. In other words, while a fundamentalist perspective allows for a multiplicity of readings in practice (e.g., devotional readings for per-sonal edification), it runs into problems when stacked against the dogma of a unified perspective that believes in one truth.

I find Patte's understanding of the fundamentalist position to be more sympathetic than most. I take issue, however, with his framing of the matter. He still, ultimately, finds the problem to be with them, i.e., the fundamentalists' unified perspective of one truth. Thus, while he is not explicitly confronting an invalid/illegitimate position, he is driven by the desire to lead these poor fundamentalists to the real truth—a multidimen-sional perspective. This is explicit when he says:

> In sum, our own sense of vocation requires that we affirm the *legitimacy* of the different views of vocation of most other inter-preters of the Bible. Yet we have to contest the *validity* of any vocation that claims to be the only legitimate and valid one. (78)

With regards to fundamentalists, Patte acknowledges the *legitimacy* of their position in light of their context and situation, but then claims it is inherently contradictory and thus invalid. What is the difference be-tween validity and legitimacy when it really comes down to it? Legiti-macy implies, for Patte, a consistency within one's own perspective. Validity, on the other hand, still holds to some sense of "the truth"—a unified viewpoint. In the end, I am still unsure of how Patte's proposal, though nuanced with (too) many adjectives (male, American/European, multidimensional, androcritical), is really different from uni-perspectivism at its most essential point—the right to determine validity. Notice that the title of his book is *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*, not

"An Ethics of Biblical Interpretation." His discussion clarifies that this is not a meta-ethic by which all others are judged. One may question, however, who he intended the audience to be. Does he assume that he is only addressing male, European/American biblical exegetes? If not, then how does his book address those of us who are not MEA's? By affirming the *legitimacy* of other positions, while still maintaining the *validity* of his own, has he really moved beyond andro-and ethno-centrism? I applaud Patte's appeal to a multiplicity of readings. However, I reject, and take issue with, the intellectual high ground that this decision is made from—a perspective from which one can make readings legitimate, and question their validity.

— FRANK YAMADA
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Bible in Modern Culture: Theology and Historical-critical Method from Spinoza to Käsemann. By Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg. Eerdmans, 1995. 282 pages.

Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, both of Luther Seminary, have written a compelling study which traces the rise of historical criticism. This volume is both a welcome contribution to the growing body of literature *about* the historical method, and also an intriguing critical interpretation of biblical interpretation. The book has two parts: the first and last chapters advance Harrisville and Sundberg's argument that historical criticism consists of a "war of worldviews;" the middle chapters consist of interpretations of ten great figures in New Testament interpretation. The book argues that historical-critical method is necessary to responsible biblical scholarship, but that the Church may not be able to survive historical criticism's assault on faith.

The heart of the book is the middle chapters which contain critical assessments of leading figures. These chapters are essentially a Great Thinkers/Great Books approach to history. Each chapter treats a seminal thinker and proceeds along roughly the same plan. The historical context of the thinker's time is sketched, a brief biography is provided, at least one major work is treated, and a critical assessment is offered. Each fig-

ure is treated as a child of his own time and his work is presented in the context of the cultural/intellectual environment which reigned in his day: Spinoza (rationalism), H. S. Reimarus (enlightenment), F. Schleiermacher (romanticism), D. F. Strauss and F. C. Baur (Hegelian idealism), J. C. K. von Hofmann (salvation history), E. Troeltsch (classical liberalism), J. G. Machen (fundamentalism), R. Bultmann (crisis theology) and E. Käsemann (theology of the cross). Each thinker is treated evenly, although the heroes of the book appear (to this reader) to be Bultmann and Käsemann. These middle chapters do offer some surprises, either from the choice of content (von Hofmann and Machen) or from interpretation (Schleiermacher and Bultmann). I especially recommend the chapters on Spinoza, Baur, Bultmann and Käsemann. The entire middle section of this volume is invaluable reading to any pastor or thinker who wishes to understand the history of biblical scholarship. Individual chapters will prove useful reading for anyone interested in Baur, Troeltsch, Bultmann, etc.

The story which these middle chapters implicitly narrate is taken up explicitly in the opening and closing chapters. "The Enlightenment Tradition," according to the authors, "believes that it is able to go beyond the reach of cultural presuppositions and philosophical commitments to establish the historical meanings of biblical texts once and for all. It is this tradition of scholarship that is being called into question" (263). The authors believe they have proved that "no method of interpretation can transcend its cultural milieu." The authors argue that Spinoza, Reimarus and Strauss employed the historical-critical method because it wrenched the Bible out of the hands of those who used it to legitimate their own power. Given that historical criticism successfully won the battle against "church civilization," Harrisville and Sundberg argue that the task today for scholars is to examine not only the meaning of the Bible but the truth claims to which scholars pledge themselves.

This book is not a simple read. The subject matters it addresses are at times difficult and the authors make no attempt to dumb them down. Among other strengths already mentioned, this volume is a sterling example of theological interdisciplinary cooperation: Harrisville the NT scholar and Sundberg the church historian combine strengths to make this an insightful read. If the book has a weakness it is that the authors have not come into conversation with the current debate on hermeneutics. The title of the book, *The Bible in Modern Culture*, is accurate in

that there is no hint of post-modern awareness here. But that is a small criticism. After all, the history of historical criticism is the history of modernity from Spinoza through Käsemann.

— ROLF A. JACOBSON
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6. by Paul N. Anderson WUNT 2, no. 78. J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1996, xv and 329 pages.

This monograph is an expansion of Paul N. Anderson's doctoral dissertation, submitted to the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Glasgow in 1988. It addresses the problem of christological tensions in the Fourth Gospel, a phenomenon Anderson dubs John's "christological unity and disunity." In the Fourth Gospel Jesus' person and work are presented in apparently contradictory terms: for instance, Jesus is both the Word (1:1, an "exalted" christology) and the one who can do nothing on his own authority (5:30, a "subordinationist" christology); his signs are both catalysts to faith [20:31] and media of revelation, which ought not be necessary for faith (6:26, 51; 20:29). Anderson's thesis endeavors to explain how these disparate themes relate to each other and how that relationship originated.

The bulk of the book is a dialogue with R. Bultmann. Under Bultmann's influence a significant number of Johannine scholars have explained John's christological tensions as the fortuitous result of the Gospel's composition history. According to Bultmann, the Fourth Evangelist composed the Gospel by roughly cutting and pasting together several sources which were at his disposal: a Synoptic tradition, a Passion source, a *semeia* ("signs") source, and a revelatory discourse [*Offenbarungsreden*] source. Each source had its own distinctive christology which resulted in a dissonant blend of christological themes when the Evangelist juxtaposed them. Though details are debated (e.g., a Synoptic-like source instead of the Synoptic tradition), a substantial number of scholars explain the Fourth Gospel's contradictory depictions of Jesus by recourse to some form of this theory. Anderson, by contrast, argues

that the Fourth Gospel's christological tensions arose because the Evangelist used a dialectical method in doing his theology. Developing a point earlier made by C.K. Barrett ("The Dialectical Theology of St. John" [1972]), Anderson contends that the christological polarities in the Fourth Gospel arose, not from factors "external" to the thinking and writing of the Evangelist (i.e., the redaction of sources), but from processes "internal" to him (p. 2).

Since John 6 is the *locus* where most of the alleged sources are thought to have converged, Anderson's dialogue with Bultmann largely takes place through an exegesis of that chapter. After reviewing recent approaches to the Fourth Gospel's christology and significant treatments of John 6 (Part I: chapters 1-3), Anderson examines Bultmann's linguistic, literary, and ideological premises for positing several sources behind John 6 and finds them wanting (Part II: chapters 4-7). Bultmann correctly detected "subtle inconsistencies and perplexities" in the chapter (p.140), but enough harmony exists behind those inconsistencies to suggest they arose, not from a careless mix of independent sources, but from dialectical processes within a single mind. The christological tensions of John 6 are better explained through "a different compositional model: that of the evangelist as a follower of Jesus, who is reflecting dialectically upon the significance of Jesus' ministry for future generations" (p.164).

At this juncture Anderson makes an advance on Barrett's views and argues that the Fourth Evangelist's dialectical christology can be understood in terms of two contemporary theories of cognitive development: J. Fowler's developmental model and J. Loder's transformational model. The Gospel's ambivalence toward Jesus' signs shows that the Evangelist had reached Fowler's *Conjunctive* stage (Stage 5) of cognitive maturation, wherein an individual is able to believe in two contradictory ideas simultaneously. Similarly, the Gospel's oscillation between "exalted" and "subordinationist" christologies reveals that the Evangelist had transformationally reflected (Loder) upon the crisis of encountering "the *Shekinah* presence of God" in the man Jesus (p.165). This conjunctive/transformational dialectic, according to Anderson, worked itself out on three levels of dialogue (Part III: chapters 8-10): one "reflective" (the Evangelist interacting with his own previous tradition; 6:1-24), one "literary" (the Evangelist interacting with his audience; 6:25-66), and one

"theological and ecclesiological" (the Evangelist interacting with his socio-religious milieu; 6:67-71).

Anderson's thesis is dynamic and provocative, negotiating many nuances, making numerous secondary points, and raising an array of questions in the mind of the reader. D. Moody Smith says as much in his Foreword, where he writes that Anderson "will have also set an agenda for his own career, if he undertakes to address all the counterquestions his proposals will doubtless engender" (p. iv). One such question concerns the relation of Anderson's cognitive-dialectical hypothesis to Bultmann's source theory. In Section II Anderson argues that the christological tensions in John 6 derive from processes "internal to the thinking and writing of the evangelist" (p. 2), yet, in Section III (chapter 8), Anderson claims that part of those processes included the Evangelist's "reflective dialogue" with an older tradition available to him. While Anderson suggests that this older tradition may have simply been the Evangelist's previous views about Jesus, he also leaves room for that tradition to have been a previous, non-Synoptic source (particularly, the Evangelist's teacher; p.170). Consequently, despite Anderson's rebuttal of Bultmann's source theory, he ultimately does allow the possibility that the Evangelist's dialectical processes involved reflection on a previous tradition; i.e., on a source "external" to himself. One might, therefore, ask how necessary it is for Anderson to disprove Bultmann's source hypothesis in order to establish a cognitive-dialectical one. To put it another way, though significant differences exist between the source and dialectical theories, the notion of sources behind the Fourth Gospel and a dialectical explanation of the Gospel's christological tensions are not mutually exclusive. If the Evangelist could have had a "reflective dialogue" with one previous tradition outside of himself, could he not have done so with several? Given this possibility, Anderson's refutation of Bultmann in chapters 4-6 must be regarded as an incisive, but unnecessary, premise for his argument.

A second question concerns the extent to which psychological models can be employed to answer the (historical) question of christological origins. The most intriguing implication Anderson draws from his dialectical theory is that the Fourth Gospel's christology was formulated, not by second or third generation Christians half-a-century after Jesus' death (as is conventionally understood), but by one of Jesus' followers during Jesus' own lifetime. Using Fowler's model to compare views on

miracles in the Gospels of John and Mark (or pre-Markan "Petrine" material), Anderson argues that, while the Fourth Evangelist's belief about miracles had reached Fowler's *Conjunctive* stage (i.e., the ability to hold two disparate views in tension), Mark had only reached the *Individuative-Reflective* stage (Stage 4) (i.e., he only had the capacity to hold one view at a time). For John, miracles were catalysts to faith *and* embodiments of revelation (two contradictory views); for Mark, they were only acts of power (one consistent view). On this premise Anderson reasons that the relation of the Gospels of John and Mark to Jesus should not be construed in the conventional way; i.e., Mark as an early, proximate witness to Jesus and John as a late, theologically-laden one. Instead, both are to be understood as "bi-optic gospels" (pp. 153f., 183). That is to say, each were the product of one of Jesus' immediate disciples: their differences came not because Mark was early and John was late, but because Mark processed Jesus' miracles on *Individuative-Reflective* level while John processed them on a *Conjunctive* one. "Thus, Mark and John are 'bi-optic' in the sense that they report two traditional 'perspectives' which must have arisen from different sectors of Jesus' band" (p. 183; Anderson develops this idea further in Appendix VIII and in *HBT* 17/1 [1995] 1-24, suggesting the apostles Mark and John were the actual writers of their respective gospels,).

The problem in this reconstruction is that a psychological model is being used (unaided) to answer an historical question (NB: the question Anderson has in view is "the origin of John's distinctive christology"; [p. 2]). This is not to suggest that interdisciplinary avenues cannot be employed to assist historical inquiry, but to clarify the extent to which they are able to do so. While Fowler's developmental model does offer new *criteria* by which a search for christological origins can be conducted, it cannot *propose* a new view of those origins unless it is corroborated with historical data that support it. Anderson's attempt to establish that data, however, is quite problematic. He argues that the Fourth Gospel is likely an early and direct witness to Jesus because its narrative shows signs of having derived directly from oral, not written, tradition. Examining the accounts of Jesus feeding the multitude and walking on the sea in Mark (6:30-52; 8:1-10), John (6:1-24), Matthew (14:13-33), and Luke (9:10-17), Anderson reasons that (a) since Mark and John contain much graphic, illustrative, and non-symbolic detail while Matthew and Luke do not and (b) since Mark (in Anderson's judg-

ment) was written directly from oral tradition while Matthew and Luke drew upon written tradition (i.e., Mark), then (c) John's affinities with Mark imply that it, too, derived directly from oral tradition. "Therefore, *if* Matthew's and Luke's redactions of Mark tell us anything about how John may have been written, John *could not have been* a redaction of another written source, Marcan or otherwise" (p.190). The weakness in Anderson's syllogism is that he makes a general conclusion about the movement from oral to written tradition on the basis of only one set of pericopes. While it may be true that the Matthean and Lukan accounts of Jesus feeding the multitude and walking on the sea contain less detail than the Markan and Johannine ones, that is not necessarily the case with every pericope shared among the Synoptics and John. One need only look at the embellishments which the Lukan account of the Transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36) adds to the Markan (9:2-10) one (cf. esp. Mk 9:2-5 with Lk 9:28-29, 32-33) to see that the presence of graphic detail is not in itself a sure indicator that a narrative has derived directly from oral tradition.

In the absence of solid, corroborative historical data, Anderson's conclusions about the dialectical origins of the Fourth Gospel's christology are suggestive, but highly speculative. This is perhaps indicated in the language he often uses when making predications about the earliest stages of the Fourth Gospel's christological development. When applying Fowler's model to the Gospel, for instance, he writes:

> Therefore, Stage 5 *Conjunctive* faith holds apparently conflicting aspects of truth in tension and affirms a both/and approach to faith, rather than an either/or stance. This is the sort of thinker the Fourth Evangelist *must have been*. (p.164; italics here and below are mine)

Similarly, when assessing Loder's transformational model as a way of explaining the Fourth Gospel's christological tensions, he states:

> The many "Aha!" encounters with Jesus intrinsic to the Johannine witness suggest that a foundational origin of its epistemological content *must have come* from "knowing events," which in their being reflected upon and proclaimed within the community of

faith (and beyond), facilitate like transformations for future generations. (p.164)

Moreover, in the midst of using Loder's transformational model as a lens for understanding the Fourth Gospel's account of Jesus walking on the sea, Anderson makes the following comments:

> Analyzed in terms of Loder's five-step anatomy of the experience of knowing, the disciple to whom the Johannine account is due *must have undergone a mental "dialogue"* which went something like this...(Loder's five-step process). (p.185)

> Therefore, Jesus' ambiguous words and actions are interpreted differently by the two disciples, who *must have been* the sources of the "Petrine" and Johannine accounts of the sea crossing... (p.186)

> This (Loder's five-step process) suggests the sort of experience *it must have been* for one of Jesus' followers. (p. 186)

Finally, closing this last mentioned treatment of Jesus walking on the water, Anderson concludes:

> In short, at least some of the differences between the Synoptic(s) and John *may have been due* to consequences following the diverging "first impressions" of two men in the same boat. At the startling appearance and words of Jesus, while one *may have exclaimed* something like, "My God! It's a *ghost* (his italics)!" (cf. Matt. 14:26 and 26:74!); the other *may have confessed* under his breath, "My Lord, and my God!" (cf. Jn 20:28) (p. 187)

This critique of Anderson's argument does not dismiss his contribution to research on the origin of the Fourth Gospel's christology. The value of Anderson's work lies not so much in establishing a new paradigm of Johannine christological development as in offering new (interdisciplinary) criteria by which historical data about that development may be assessed. If others follow his lead, the literary, rhetorical, and sociological methodologies which have recently enhanced Johannine studies will be

further enriched by techniques and models drawn from psychological research. Though persuasive historical data are absent from Anderson's thesis, he has nevertheless paved the way for further inquiry to be conducted along fresh lines.

—MICHAEL A. DAISE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Christ in Christian Tradition, vol. 2, part. 4: *The Church of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451*. By Aloys Grillmeier, SJ, in collaboration with Theresia Hainthaler. Translated by O. C. Dean Jr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. Pp.xxiv + 431.

The question of the divinity of the Second Person of the Trinity and of the Holy Spirit had been settled by the councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381). But the question of how divinity and humanity are joined in Jesus Christ caused bitter theological controversies and acrimonious confrontations which could not be solved by the council of Chalcedon (451). The Church which experienced the most mordant dispute over the issue was the Church of Alexandria, with its surrounding areas of Nubia and Ethiopia. The Chalcedonian "Definition of Faith", i.e., that in Christ there are "two natures in one person", led in these lands to a split of the Church in "two hierarchies." On the one hand, the Melkites who confessed the 'one hypostasis in two natures', and on the other hand, the Copts who professed the 'one nature (hypostasis) of the incarnate word' (p. 1). A lot has been penned about these groups, but the history of the development of the Christian faith in this region of Eastern Christianity remained to be written in light of newly discovered materials. This is the task undertaken by Aloys Grillmeier, in collaboration with Theresia Hainthaler, in this volume of *Christ in Christian Tradition*. In their book the authors attempt "to follow the path of the gospel and explore the unity and diversity of the faith along the Nile" (p. vi) from the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon until the penetration of Islam in the 7th century. They examine the development and expression of post-Chalcedonian faith in Christ in the distinctive areas of the Nile

and the missionary expeditions that characterized them; and they scrutinize their christologies, liturgies, and art.

Part one deals with the Alexandrian-Greek Christology. "Alexandrian-Greek" because, at the time, the great Egyptian city of Alexandria, a major metropolis, largely Greek-speaking, economically and politically integrated into the Roman imperial system, was not believed to be a part of Egypt, whose population beyond the limits of the big city knew no Greek. The Egyptian population, mostly peasants of the Nile Valley, spoke Coptic, which was likewise the language of the monks.

In Alexandria, "the Christ-loving city" (p. 389), the Christian faith found itself expressed in two styles of christology: the Christology of the Patriarchs and the Christology of the Scholars. The former is more vividly described in the conflict between Chalcedonian patriarchs like Timothy 'Wobble-Cap,' Eulogius and later Melkite leaders, and anti-Chalcedonian patriarchs with players like Cyril, Severus of Antioch, Theodosius, Timothy Aelurus, Peter Mongus, and their Copt successors. The general picture is that of an anarchy upon which the patriarchal authority, weakened by competing patriarchs, could not prevail (p. 390).

On the whole, "the anti-Chalcedonian orthodoxy" (p. 389) dominated the city. But its champions maintained a moderate Monophysitism and supported the compromise of the *Henoticon* of Zeno ("understood as a rejection of Chalcedon"[p.87]), against the extremism of the Julianites and Gaianites (pp. 45-56; 389). An emphasis is put on the confession of the first three councils "seen as the foundation of faith;" the *unus ex trinitate*; "the true humanity of Christ with a rational soul and a truly human (corruptible) body;" the *mia energeia* in Christ together with the *mia physis* and the *mia hypostasis*. These latter phrases continued to remain synonymous for the Alexandrian anti-Chalcedonians. It is the authors' opinion that prejudices and misinterpretations of this "conceptual language" led to successive schismatic groups such as: the Julianistes and Gaianites, the tritheists and their sub-groups, the Agnoetes and the Damianites, in addition to whom smaller schismatic circles existed. Their conclusion is that although theological speculations continue to be made in each side of the controversy, it is "the *mia-physis* Christology [that] finally prevailed for the most part in the hierarchy, in popular faith and among the monks" (p. 390).

The Christology of the Scholars is represented by the poet Nonnus of Panopolis and his fellow countrymen, the exegetes Ammonius and

Olympiodore, the philosopher and theologian John Philoponus, and by the travelling businessman Cosmas Indicopleustes. This section highlights and evaluates, in the light of the partriarchal Christology, the inestimable "contribution of the Greek-speaking intellectuals of Egypt" (p. 89) to the debate.

Part two treats the "province of Coptic Christology,"(p. 163) up the Nile. Here we encounter the great monastic figure Shenoute, "the real founder of Coptic theological literature and head of the 'White Monastery' at Suhag." (p. 163). The new discoveries of the Nag Hammadi tractates and the pieces of Greek and Coptic papyri in the bindings of certain codices shed a new light on his Christology, which remains "almost completely free from the dispute over the one or the two natures,"(p. 391) and at the center of which stands "the simple kerygma and plain Jesus piety" (p. 391). This monastic father belongs to the history of the Prayer of Jesus and plays a role in the fight against some suspicious Origenist teachings. His Christocentrism influenced Coptic literature and worship whose liturgies hardly reveal anything of the dispute over the one or two natures of Christ.

Part three considers the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian competing missionary expeditions in Nubia. New researches disclose christological results in this land. Already before Chalcedon, Christianity penetrated the region from Egypt through slow infiltration. From Nubia, faith in Christ was established in the Sudan for about one thousand years before the coming of Islam in the region, under pressure of which the Christian Church suffocated. The activity of the Patriarch Theodosius and the post-Chalcedon religious policy under emperor Justinian and the empress Theodora made possible the evangelization of these regions.

Part four discusses the introduction and development of Christianity in Ethiopia (formerly the kingdom of Axum whose territory extended beyond the Red sea). The founding of churches in this Axumite kingdom, is to be credited to merchants, wandering missionaries and native princes, but Ethiopians believed their church to be founded by the legendary nine Syrian monks, the so-called "nine saints" (p. 302ff). This is a church which, in the building up of its faith, ended up with "a mixture of universal-church traditions and striking idiosyncrasies, of Hellenistic-Alexandrian, Jewish, Arabic and Byzantine influences"(p. 392). In the Christianity of this land Mariology is given a great significance even in eucharistic anaphora. Its doctrinal history and spirituality bear influences

of Cyril, "the father of dogmas." Grillmeier and Hainthaler leave us here with some unanswered questions such as: "Was a Jewish-Christian Church developed here more than in other patriarchates? How seriously may one value [its] claim of a messianic kingdom as religious heirs?" A task is here given by the authors to scholarship to answer these questions and to research thoroughly Cyril's teaching and compare it with Ethiopian Christianity.

This reader found some christological terminology confusing. It was introduced without being defined. Though in the abundant footnotes the authors refer to their treatment in previous volumes, it would have helped in explaining some terms again: repetition is the mother of pedagogy. But the positive contributions of the book are many and far outweigh this minor question. The volume is the result of a well-researched study, critically analyzing newly available sources of information, as shown by the bibliography of primary and secondary sources, with extensive footnotes on almost every page. The index of biblical references, of words in ancient languages (Greek, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac), of ancient and modern authors, and of the subjects treated, offers a helpful directory for a quick checking. The work is the product of considerable learning in Alexandrian and Coptic sources. I cannot envisage any student in Patristics who would not greatly profit from this exceptional publication. It is a must-read by all students in history of doctrine or in Islam who are interested in knowing more about the unity and diversity of the Christian faith as it developed in the lands of the Nile and beyond, before the emergence of Islamic faith.

—KOSSI ADIAVU AYEDZE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Philosophy in Christian Antiquity. By Christopher Stead. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 261 pages.

Reading Stead's *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* is like having a conversation with a scholar of long experience, which Christopher Stead, Ely Professor of Divinity Emeritus in the University of Cambridge, is. The

topic? The influence of Greek philosophy on young Christianity through its major theologians up to roughly the fourth century. The book has few footnotes, but several "by-the-by" comments from author to reader in the text. As the brief abstract on the opening page states, this book requires "no specialist knowledge," only an interest in and a willingness to engage the topic.

The conversation begins with a primer on Greek philosophy pre-Plato to Plotinus. Stead makes this enormous project manageable by focusing his summaries around the lines of thought that will reappear under Christian scrutiny later in the book. Clear and stimulating, this section is very helpful for the non-specialist. Although Stead readily permits the specialist to skip it and go on to part II, "The Use of Philosophy in Christian Theology," the specialist would thereby miss hearing Stead's own "take" on the philosophical tradition, which underlies the rest of the book. Because Stead sees no line of continuity and development in the attitude of Christians toward philosophy, or their use of it, the second section is not arranged chronologically, but thematically. Listed chapter by chapter, the themes are: The debate about Christian philosophy; Greek and Hebrew conceptions of God; Proofs of the existence of God; God as simple unchanging Being; How God is described; Logos and Spirit; Unity of Substance; Substance and Persons; Christ as God and Man; and Two natures united. Of course, there is a chronological element in the arrangement of these themes. The theme of "unity of substance," for example, came into the foreground during the debates over the term *homoousios* during and after the Council of Nicaea in 325, while it was later that the Cappadocians devoted their considerable energy to clarifying the distinction between "substance and persons." About his choice of this approach, Stead writes,

> I will try to investigate the main concepts which Christian thinkers either learnt from the philosophers or developed along lines which show their influence. This method of treatment may lack the human warmth which could be introduced if we treated the Christian thinkers one by one. But I believe it can be made interesting and intelligible enough to any moderately competent reader who preserves the spirit of enquiry. (p. 93)

(A word of warning to the true beginner: The complexity of some of these topics may push you to the limits of your "spirit of enquiry." Persevere! With the possible exception of the chapters on Unity of Substance, and Substance and Persons, the topics are presented as lucidly as possible.)

In the course of the conversation there are certain questions to which Stead comes around again and again, such as: how being is defined, what evil is, to what extent humans are free (which involves the issue of God's foreknowledge), and what the status of time is. The professor states his opinion on these matters, but then one can picture him leaning forward in his chair, hands folded, eyes intent, repeatedly inviting reaction, questions and further engagement from the readers, or "students." As he says, the book "sets out to provide an elementary and comprehensible introduction to difficult problems. The last thing I intend to do is to close the door on further discussion." (p. 240)

For Stead, the one Christian thinker who cannot be passed over lightly when dealing with the influence of philosophy on Christianity is Augustine, who is the subject of the final section of the book. Throughout this section, Stead promotes Augustine's articulation of the Christian faith and its use of philosophy as an example of how conscious and discerning appropriation can be done thoroughly, consistently and responsibly, to form a highly integrated system. This does not mean, however, that Augustine is beyond criticism. Stead finds that he cannot swallow Augustine's teaching on evil as negation, with its basis in Platonic ontology. Stead presses us to drop the line of thinking that equates being and value, although it may feel risky to do so, since Platonic ontology was from so early on "adopted and used and ultimately worked into the whole fabric of Christian orthodoxy." (p. 243)

A revised edition of Stead's *Philosophie und Theologie I* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990), *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* is not the only book of its kind. Stead admits this, listing some of the others by topic in the bibliography. But, as the author says, with particular reference to the section on Augustine, "There is room, I would think, for a much briefer and simpler critical study" (xi), which he intends this volume to be. Reading his work draws one into the atmosphere of a tutorial; upon finishing it, this reviewer found herself wanting to write Professor Stead a letter, asking questions, taking issue with some of his conclusions, and, in general, urging the dialogue on. Since this is the result that Stead

seems to hope for, he has succeeded. Because of Stead's direct style of addressing the reader, the book lends itself to interactive reading, and would be a very good resource for beginning students of theology, particularly in the field of the history of Christian doctrine.

—CAROLYN M. SCHNEIDER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher. By Dawn DeVries. Columbia Series in Reformed Theology. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. Pp. ix + 115. $ 15.00

Dawn DeVries has written a short but ambitious book. Her project is to examine selected sermons of Calvin and Schleiermacher, in order to determine how each understood the presence of Christ in the preached Word. In other words, how did Calvin and Schleiermacher conceive of the relationship between "the Jesus of history" and "the Christ present in the proclaimed word" (p. ix)? At its basic level, her project is to demonstrate that these theologians mediated faith and history in their sermons in very similar ways. She argues that an analysis of Calvin's and Schleiermacher's preaching reveals that both theologians concentrated on "the Christ present in the proclaimed word" rather than on "the Jesus of history." In the process of making this argument, DeVries also undertakes two subsidiary interpretative projects. First, she seeks to demonstrate that Hans Frei's reading of Calvin as a "precritical" interpreter of the biblical texts is at least unnuanced and possibly a misreading (p. 7-8). Second, she aims to overturn Karl Barth's claim that Schleiermacher departed from the classic Reformed understanding of the preached Word by substituting human words for the Word of God (p. 6).

DeVries employs a three-fold pattern of argumentation in her book. Treating Calvin and Schleiermacher in turn, she provides first a brief interpretation of each theologian's doctrine of the preached Word. She then tests her interpretation against selected sermons (on the synoptic Gospels) preached by that theologian. In the process, she assesses the competing interpretations put forward by Frei and by Barth.

DeVries sets the stage for her discussion of Calvin's doctrine of the spoken Word by noting the existence of a tension in the classical doctrine of the spoken Word as articulated by Augustine. Augustine understood the sermon to be both sacramental and didactic (p. 14). Qua sacramental, the sermon is itself a means of grace. Qua didactic, the sermon is a teaching tool that instructs and prepares congregations to partake in the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. DeVries argues that the didactic conception of the sermon dominated during the Middle Ages. Only with the Reformation did the sacramental view reemerge and take precedence (p. 15). When Calvin declared that the preached Word is the primary means of grace, he was thus simply appropriating and radicalizing Augustine's sacramental conception of the sermon.

DeVries notes Calvin's frequent references to the sermon as "offering" or "presenting" Christ to contemporary Christians. She argues that Calvin did not hold "a memorialistic understanding of representation" but held that the sermon actually presents Christ to the congregation (p. 18). Most importantly, Calvin saw that this renewed understanding of the sermon as a means of grace implied a transformation in the understanding of grace itself. DeVries concludes that for Calvin "Grace was no longer an incrementally infused quality but renewed personal relationship, made possible by God's initiative in addressing sinners" (p. 20). How did Calvin's elevation of the preached Word to the primary means of grace affect his preaching? Interestingly, DeVries does not answer this question head-on, but chooses to approach it from a contemporary standpoint. Her analysis of Calvin's sermons is predominantly concerned with defusing Frei's proposal that Calvin was more interested in bringing his hearers into the world of the biblical narrative than he was in extracting doctrines from the text that he then might apply to the contemporary situation. On the contrary, DeVries argues that Calvin had a keen interest in the doctrinal implications of the biblical texts. She contends that "Calvin shows a perhaps surprising indifference to the narratives as narratives. Rather, he looks constantly for the 'doctrine' they convey, and, at the same time, perceives them as means by which Christ makes himself present in Calvin's own day" (p. 27). DeVries stresses that although Calvin never seriously questioned the historicity of the biblical texts, he did not show much interest in their historicity. He was primarily concerned with finding "general principles" in the biblical histories that might fruitfully be applied in his own time (p. 35). Therefore, DeVries

questions whether Frei's presentation of Calvin as a "precritical" exegete is justified. Calvin simply did not place any strong emphasis on the narrative structure of the texts that he preached; he concentrated his attention on individual details rather than the whole (p. 42-3).

One wishes that DeVries had undertaken a more comprehensive investigation of Frei's thesis. She notes that her study of Calvin is based on his sermons on the synoptic Gospels, whereas Frei focused primarily on Calvin's manner of relating the Old and New Covenants in the *Institutes* and on his Old Testament commentaries (p. 42). It would be fruitful to investigate further whether Calvin's understanding of the unity of the Covenant compelled him to present Christ in his sermons on Old Testament texts in the same manner as he presented Christ when he preached on New Testament texts. In order to decide whether Calvin was a "precritical" exegete in Frei's sense, it seems that one would have to examine Calvin's sermons on both Old and New Testament texts, rather than his sermons on the synoptic gospels alone. It might also be questioned whether DeVries is right to suggest that Calvin sought to discern "general principles" when preaching on the synoptic Gospels. The term "general principle" implies that Calvin bypassed the person of Christ in order to find higher christological "principles," which would be at least logically independent of Christ's specific person. If this were the case, it would drain the *Christus Praesens* of the personal, relational character that DeVries rightly argues was Calvin's most important contribution to the doctrine of the sacramental Word.

DeVries's presentation of Schleiermacher's doctrine of the preached Word is clearly argued and well-documented. She carefully locates Schleiermacher's writings on the preached Word in the context of his oeuvre, discriminating between texts that outline his theory of religious language in general and texts that treat Christian religious language in particular. She also demonstrates the interconnections between these texts. Particularly helpful is her treatment of Schleiermacher's *Practical Theology*. In this less known work, Schleiermacher articulated his view of what he termed "religious speech" (p. 53). He introduced this term in order to expand the concept of the preached Word beyond the confines of the sermon. DeVries notes Schleiermacher's interesting view "that the form of religious speech that prevails in Protestant worship—the sermon—is simply an accidental or chance development, connected with the peculiar history of the Reformation churches" (p. 52). DeVries does

not dwell long on this point, but it is very intriguing. What would a Protestant liturgy without a sermon look like? By what vehicle would Christ be presented to the congregation?

DeVries finds Schleiermacher's most mature doctrine of the preached Word in his *Glaubenslehre*. Schleiermacher posited there that we are in relationship with Christ because we stand in the ongoing stream of Christ's work. Preaching is simply a continuation of that work whereby those who are more fully situated in that stream present their God-consciousness to those who are less fully situated in it. Preaching communicates the more fully developed God-consciousness of the preacher to the less fully developed God-consciousness of the hearers (p. 63). But all preaching is also essentially the self-communication of Christ to these hearers because it is Christ's preaching that stimulated and continues to stimulate the God-consciousness of the one who is preaching. DeVries notes that Schleiermacher drew so tight a connection between Christ's work and contemporary preaching that "it is not too strong a statement to say that these two are actually one and the same" (p. 63). Rather than simply pointing to Christ and his work, the sermon forms an essential extension of Christ's work.

The tight connection that Schleiermacher made between Christ's work and the proclaimed Word heavily influenced his sermons. Like Calvin, Schleiermacher did not dwell on biblical narratives in his sermons. But neither did he question their historicity. Instead he concentrated on the doctrinal implications of the biblical texts (p. 85). Particularly striking is DeVries's study of Schleiermacher's sermons on Jesus's death and resurrection. Schleiermacher preached many times on texts related to the crucifixion and resurrection but never took up the question of their historicity in his sermons (p. 89). Although Schleiermacher rather infamously declared Christ might not actually have died on the Cross in his *Life of Jesus* (much to the chagrin of Hans Frei), he did not outwardly defend that view in his sermons. DeVries illustrates that Schleiermacher preached in a similar fashion to Calvin; he left the historicity of Christ's death and resurrection largely unquestioned and concentrated instead on their significance for his contemporaries (p. 89).

DeVries draws her many-threaded argument together in a short, final chapter. She contends that Calvin's understanding of the work of Christ was not fully consistent with his doctrine of the sacramental Word. Calvin vacillated between portraying Christ's work as taking place only

extra nos or also *in nobis* (p. 96). She contends that Schleiermacher's understanding of the sermon as a continuation of the work of Christ actually refines and corrects Calvin's christology. She notes that Barth and Bultmann also adopted a sacramental understanding of the Word in the twentieth century. In her opinion, Schleiermacher thus forged a crucial link in the development of the doctrine of the sacramental Word. Against Barth, DeVries claims that the Reformed tradition runs through Schleiermacher and not around him.

DeVries's work on Calvin and Schleiermacher is on the whole well-informed and thought-provoking. She keeps her eyes focused clearly on matters of import and does not allow herself to become bogged down in lengthy analysis of particular details. In general this is an effective strategy. There are times, however, when the reader wishes that she had paused a little while longer over some details. Does the doctrine of the sacramental Word really free contemporary pastors from practical concerns about the historicity of the biblical narratives? May congregations not have grown more skeptical about the historicity of these narratives as a result of the recent onslaught of popular books about the historical Jesus? Can pastors really afford to pass over their skepticism in silence? DeVries alludes to such practical questions and sketches answers, but does not treat them in depth. At other times, one wishes that she would have found occasion to address topics that she merely passes over in silence. What about Schleiermacher's assertion in *The Christmas Eve* that one might let the words of a Requiem go and not lose anything essential? It would be interesting to hear something about his understanding of the relationship between words, music and the Word. Finally, one might quibble with DeVries's treatment of Barth. While it is true that Barth sometimes railed against Schleiermacher, he admitted at other times to a deep ambivalence about whether he had understood Schleiermacher correctly. Might not DeVries celebrate an interpretation of Schleiermacher that discerns the deep underlying connections he has with Calvin without deriding Barth as a Zwinglian (and therefore implying that Barth himself stood outside the Calvinist line)? But one should not allow these quibbles and curiosities to detract from DeVries's accomplishments. She has written a fine book that simultaneously advances arguments in many contemporary theological debates.

—CLIFFORD BLAKE ANDERSON
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

In Good Company: The Church as Polis. By Stanley Hauerwas. University of Notre Dame Press, 1995, 268 pages.

Stanley Hauerwas sets the tone for this volume when he himself asks in the introduction: "Why read another book by Hauerwas?" The question is a good one, since Hauerwas has been producing books at a rate that would seem to outpace his own ability to reflect on such a vast amount of material.

This book, as with most of the books Hauerwas has authored, is a collection of essays. It proceeds in three sections. In Part I he reflects on life in the Church in a Protestant mode. In Part II he moves to a Catholic mode, reflecting on the Catholic community for the benefit of Catholic and Protestant alike. Part III is a looser collection of essays on a variety of topics ranging from Americanism to vegetarianism.

As usual, Hauerwas peppers his prose with an irreverent and humorous style that, although expected, still manages to catch the reader off-guard. Rare is the theology book which causes the reader to chuckle. Hauerwas's account of his first faculty get-together at Notre Dame (where he discovers that one of his colleagues has "just seven" children) amuses the reader, yet sharply makes Hauerwas's point that certain practices define what it means to be "Catholic"; it is not simply a matter of holding to certain ideas about God and the world.

The essay form provides the best argument for two things: first, why this book, like his others, are required reading for anyone who cares about the direction of contemporary Christian theology and ethics; and, second, why this should be the last collection of essays Hauerwas produces for the foreseeable future. Two particular essays highlight both the promise and the problems of this format.

The promise of the essay form is demonstrated in the fine piece on casuistry: "Casuistry in Context: The Need for Tradition." Here Hauerwas manages both to critique a position he finds problematic and to provide a clear, substantial alternative. Some readers of Hauerwas, especially those coming from Reformed traditions, have found Hauerwas's positive use of the term "casuistry" to be confounding. How could someone who rails against the application of normative, universal laws affirm the practice of casuistry in ethical method? Hauerwas criticizes the common view that casuistry is the application of "ethical principles"

to particular "cases." The problem with this common view of casuistry lies in its failure to "acknowledge that casuistry is only intelligible in an ongoing tradition." Thus Hauerwas argues that casuistry is not only appropriate, but vital to ethics because it is a narrative of ongoing reflection about cases within a tradition. Hauerwas has long argued that "description is everything" when it comes to ethics: "Those who use the language of abortion and/or suicide dwell in a different world from those who use the language of termination of pregnancy and/or self-life taking." Casuistry, as a narrative tradition within a community, is how we determine whether or not those descriptions are fitting.

The consistent excellence of the essay on casuistry is sadly lacking in "Work as Co-Creation: A Critique of a Remarkably Bad Idea." In this latter essay, Hauerwas continues John Howard Yoder's attack on a natural law view of vocation. Hauerwas's specific target of attack in this essay is Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens*. With characteristic brashness Hauerwas calls *Laborem Exercens* "a disaster," with an understanding of work that is "theologically arbitrary, romantic, elitist, and certainly insufficient for an adequate social theory or critique."

Problematic for Hauerwas is John Paul II's attempt to ground the moral assessment of work upon the "natural law presumption of creation." John Paul attempts a scriptural exegesis, but concentrates on texts from Genesis while leaving out analysis of the Pauline emphasis on the powers and the Johannine theme of church and world. By concentrating on Genesis and omitting a careful and concrete social analysis of work, John Paul's encyclical is characterized by a dangerous abstraction which elevates work into "co-creation" and ignores the concrete messiness of actual labor. Most work, according to Hauerwas, is not fulfilling, and attributing such lofty significance to it risks "making it demonic."

As usual, Hauerwas has taken what seemed to be a perfectly respectable theological idea and re-described it so that it begins to appear downright sinister. This is Hauerwas at his best, demonstrating the devastating effects that such a view of vocation has for Christian discipleship. But the essay also demonstrates the clear need for Hauerwas to supplement his essays with longer treatments. Hauerwas has defended the essay's ad-hoc character as appropriate for his approach to Christian ethics. Just as he argues that ethics must grow out of lives shaped over time within particular communities, so ethics is not a disinterested, universal project that does not grow out of particular lives in particular

places. This is indeed a successful defense for the essay playing a *prominent* role in his overall project.

However, the essay format also can allow the author the safety of not dealing with matters in the comprehensive way they might require. In the case of vocation and work, Hauerwas has just enough space to burst John Paul's bubble, and to make some suggestions that could point *toward* a more adequate account of work. But it remains primarily critique and suggestion. Hauerwas cannot provide a grand theory of work; his criticisms of both Kantian universalism and consequentialism proscribe Hauerwas from providing "answers" to abstract problems. Nonetheless, he can and must move beyond the safe route of pointing out what is wrong with others and then providing mere glimpses of what could be.

At stake is whether Hauerwas's project has the potential to provide a comprehensive vision of the Christian life, or whether it remains parasitic on a broader and less particular tradition which maintains something that Hauerwas forbids the church from doing. This, of course, is a charge which Hauerwas has always denied. I see no reason why Hauerwas need accede to that criticism, but the responsibility of answering that criticism is in his hands.

This is not a call for Hauerwas to suddenly become "realistic" or some such ruse to try to force Hauerwas into becoming the liberal he abhors. Hauerwas need not accept a Lutheran doctrine of vocation in order to satisfy the requirement that I have laid out. But what he must do, for instance, is to actually develop a theology of work that is constructive and person-forming, not one that simply tells us that work is a highly ambiguous activity. Frankly, most of us already know that.

Much of this volume is accessible to the layperson while still challenging to the specialist. Yes, we do need to read another book (of essays) by Hauerwas. His arguments are too important to ignore. But the time has come for another book (not of essays). If the project is to go forward, it must be sustained in pieces longer and more comprehensive than this collection.

— CHARLES A. WILEY
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES F. MCGRATH is graduate student at the university of Durham, England. He is intersted in development of Johannine Christology. As part of his development McGrath uses Berger and Luckmann's sociological model of legitimation.

LAURA HOBGOOD-OSTER is a 1997 graduate of St. Louis University. Her Ph. D. is in Historical Theology. The topic of her dissertation concerns women and gender formation in the antebellum South. Other areas of interest are love mysticism, ecofeminism and Gnosticism.

MARK RALLS is a fourh-year student in the Theology department at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. He is specializing in Systematic Theology and is currently writing a dissertation on Karl Barth and Modern/Postmodern notions of the self.

D. PAUL LA MONTAGNE is a fifth-year student in the Theology department at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey. He is specializing in Philosophy and Theology and is currently writing a dissertation on "Karl Barth and Rationality: The Meaning of Critical Realism in Theology."